READING, WRITING, REVIEWING AND REMEMBERING

Michael Wilding

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The Magic of It
Asian Dawn
In the Valley of the Weed
Little Demon
The Travel Writer
Find Me My Enemies
Cover Story
Point Danger

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The Future of the Book

Each year more books are published than the year before. Certainly more and more information will increasingly be available on the internet and whatever other electronic media emerge. But this does not necessarily replace the book. Not many people want to sit down and read a novel or a biography or a history or a poem from a screen. The problematic issue is, what sort of books will the future hold?

Recently a major decision was made in the publishing world. It received hardly any coverage in the press, Australian or international; but its implications are immense. Reed-Elsevier, one of the largest international publishing conglomerates which was formed by the merger of the British group Reed and the Dutch group Elsevier, announced that they were putting up for sale their so called consumer books division. They were retaining their business, legal, medical and information divisions: but the consumer books division had not been delivering adequate profits. The problem, they announced, was a a combination of small print runs and a poor retail market in England and Australia. Consumer books are general books, the books you see in the bookshop, including literature, fiction and poetry, the books we read.

Literature is no longer profitable enough for a major conglomerate to be bothered with. The problem is, the conglomerates have knocked out all the literary publishers by acquiring and destroying them, so who will continue to publish literature ?

Now Reed-Elsevier may not be a name on the tip of your tongue. But they had acquired ownership of some of the premier British publishing houses - including Heinemann, Methuen, Secker & Warburg, Sinclair-Stevenson, and the paperback Minerva and Mandarin lists. A couple of years ago they had reneged on their existing poetry contracts, saying that poetry was not making sufficient money.

Heinemann, Secker & Warburg and the recently founded Sinclair-Stevenson were once distinguished literary imprints. In the extraordinary spate of acquisitions, mergers and amalgamations of the 1980s, publisher after publisher was swallowed by corporate giants like Reed.

The other significant factor about Reed's decision to sell its consumer books division was that no one seemed to want it. It languished on the market for eighteen months. Finally it was acquired by the American Newhouse group that already owns the *New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair* and the publishing houses of Random

House, and Knopf in the United States and Jonathan Cape, Chatto & Windus, and the Bodley Head in the United Kingdom.

Massive corporate takeover and amalgamation has been the pattern of the publishing industry over the last three decades. Pearsons, who own the *Financial Times*, *Investors Chronicle*, Madame Tussauds and Warwick Castle, expanded their publishing base of Viking, Penguin and Longmans to acquire Hamish Hamilton, Michael Joseph, Ladybird, McPhee Gribble, Currey O'Neil and Sphere. Murdoch's News Limited over the last two decades has acquired absorbed and merged Granada -the old Panther and Paladin lists - Harper, Basic Books, Times Books, Collins, Fontana, Flamingo, Allen & Unwin UK, Thorsons, Aquarian, Bay Books and Angus & Robertson. Recently, because of bad results for the last three years, Murdoch announced that they were not exactly going to sell off their publishing division - they had already sold off their educational division - but they were looking for someone else to come into it with them. The someone else suggested in the Murdoch press was the huge German conglomerate Bertelsman, which owns Transworld, Corgi, Black Swan, Doubleday, Dell and the Book Club. The point is that there are hardly any traditional independent publishers left. And the number of publishing groups gets fewer and fewer.

The consequence of this is that decisions are everywhere now made on an accountancy model. The sales department has more power than the editorial department in an editorial meeting. Instead of a worthwhile product being published which the sales department are then instructed to sell, the sales department now demands a product that is first of all 'saleable' -its saleability is more important than whether it is of any value to anyone. This is the situation William Morris analysed in Victorian England, when industrial products were produced not for any use, but because they could manufactured easily and sold easily to make a profit. As Morris wrote in chapter 15 of *News From Nowhere:*

> How could they possibly attend to such trifles as the quality of the wares they sold ? The best of them were of a lowish average, the worst were transparent make-shifts for the things asked for which nobody would have put up with if they could have got anything else. It was a current jest of the time that the wares were made to sell and not to use.

Another recent development is the way in which now the costs of warehousing a book are minutely calculated, so that if a title is not selling continuously, if it is perceived to be earning less money from sales than it cost to warehouse it, the title is pulped. The decisions are all cash decisions. No other value than cash is acknowledged.

Now this may be a valid way of running the entertainment industry.

The problem is that the traditional, literary publishers have almost all been acquired by entertainment conglomerates. The traditional values of literary publishing have been abandoned. Quality, value, literature are no longer relevant terms.

Again, this would not be a problem if this was a policy followed only by the conglomerates. But what the conglomerates have done is acquire the literary publishers, and then either close down or vastly reduce the traditional literary lists. They have invented a new category of airport rubbish called the 'literary bestseller' - these are the books that don't sell as many as real best sellers but no one will admit to not having got beyond page fifty, so they sell on a status, delusional image. The conglomerates are basically refusing to tolerate any alternative to the diet of crap, schlock and diversion that they pump out. Anything that might challenge that is obliterated.

In the past it used to be possible, when a publisher was acquired in a take over, for the managerial and editorial staff to go off and set up a new operation. That no longer works. Bloomsbury was the last group successfully to attempt it, after Jonathan Cape was taken over by Random House. Sinclair-Stevenson attempted to do it, after Hamish Hamilton was taken over by Viking Penguin, but in the end he had to surrender to Reeds, and now he is up for sale again. The problem now is that distribution is totally under the control of the handful of conglomerates. There is no distribution organisation that will provide an adequate service for an independent publisher.

To add to the problems, book shop retailing has similarly moved in the direction of the conglomerates. Worse than that, it is in a state of financial instability. A couple of years ago one of the larger British bookshop chains, Pentos, which owned Dillons Bookshops, went into receivership. That left only one major UK chain in place, the W.H. Smiths group, which controls Sherrard and Hughes. Waterstones, set up with governmental assistance to provide an alternative to Smiths, has now been acquired by Smiths.

What are the issues here? First of all, when a major group dominates the bookselling retail trade, it can demand discounts and terms that the publishers cannot refuse. If they refuse, their books do not get displayed. These beneficial terms - better discounts, better sale or return terms and so on - are not available to the independent booksellers. As a result independent booksellers are driven out of business. In Australia at the moment the independents comprise about sixteen per cent of the book trade. The typical independent bookseller cannot move the volume of stock that entitles the operation to good terms.

And the bookshop chains prefer to deal only with the major suppliers. They are not interested in dealing with independent publishers. They work in close co-operation with the entertainment industry conglomerates,

promoting titles according to the show-business model. That is, they promote the product that comes with a ready-made publicity campaign orchestrated through the newspapers, magazines and film and television divisions of the conglomerate. It is called vertical integration.

To repeat, this would be all good enough, if it did not mean that quality literature, small run books, serious writing was also allowed its place. But it is the nature of these massive publishing and retailing conglomerates to exclude the small, independent operators. It is simpler to deal with a limited number of accounts, with a large cash flow to them.

This model is readily admitted in the book trade. Nothing I am saying holds any surprises. This is held to be good business practice.

But it would be a mistake to think that it is only a matter of money and profits. It is also a matter of control. There was no financial need for the conglomerates to acquire the small, literary publishers that they acquired. All they have basically done is to close them down. It makes no sense in terms of profitability.

But it does make sense in terms of removing the opposition. The nature of the conglomerates, the multi-nationals, big business, is to remove the opposition. These organisations are not especially efficient in their operation. They are often vastly wasteful of resources. They regularly post vast losses. But they survive by knocking out any opposition.

In theory the mergers and takeovers of publishing houses meant larger, more efficient organisations that could effect economies of scale. To some degree this is true. A larger publishing conglomerate can get better printing contracts, better trucking rates, because of the volume of the business it does. But that very volume of business can prove self-defeating. Earlier this year Murdoch's international publishing organisation, HarperCollins, announced that it was cutting down substantially on the number of titles it published. It had found that it was publishing too many titles to market them efficiently, that it was producing lots of titles but they got inadequate sales. The figure quoted in Australia is that HarperCollins were publishing - from their UK, USA and Australian operations -3,500 titles a year. That is, ten books every day, weekends included. This number has now been reduced to 1,200 a year: - that is a mere hundred a month, or twenty five a week.

The problem, an obvious enough one, is that economies of scale for soap manufacturing or cereal manufacturing, are not readily translatable to book publishing. A soap manufacturer has a limited number of product lines, and keeps on repeating them. But with books, the hundred titles a month are all different, and are followed by a hundred titles the following month, and so on. But who can keep them all in stock ? By the time you find out a book has been published, it is likely to have vanished from the shelves. The way the book trade works is on sale or return. The books are sent out one month, sit in the shop - or are bought - for six

weeks: and then displaced by the next month's product. Displaced, they are packed up and returned to the warehouse, where they sent off for pulping into egg cartons. Sources in the trade tell me that some publishers are receiving up to sixty per cent returns. That is sixty per cent of the product is written off. In the automobile industry the working figure for bad debts on new cars is one per cent.

But it would be a mistake to think that this extraordinary behaviour of publishing corporations was only a matter of business practice. It is also a matter of control. The West congratulates itself on its free press, on its lack of censorship structures. But it does not need them when the controls are already in place with current publishing practices.

When censorship was first introduced into Britain some 500 years ago, shortly after the development of printing, the state made a very smart decision. Censorship was not administered by the state, but by the church, whose representatives were to read manuscripts, and by the licensed stationers - the publishers, booksellers and printers - who were to police the controls. It was in the interest of the licensed stationers to detect, inform upon, and put out of business any unlicensed, independent operators - anybody whose business encroached upon their own profits. To put it simply, the licensed operators were in complicity with the state in enforcing censorship. That is still the model.

The new way to have a controlled media is to have a handful of conglomerates dominating the publishing industry. These conglomerates are deeply involved in film, television, newspaper and electronic publishing. In order to operate in these areas, they need to have a good working relationships with national governments. Their managers and figureheads are constantly in communication with national leaders - are regularly photographed with them; and regularly offer them extraordinary publishing contracts for their memoirs or manifestoes, well in advance of anything that makes sense to me.

So it is all very simple. Nothing subversive, nothing challenging, nothing questioning the status quo will get through these channels.

If it does get through, by chance, then it is very easy to suppress the item; to pulp it, to lose copies, accidentally to damage stock, or to decide that it is not moving fast enough to remain in print or that it should not go into paperback All these tricks have been used, and continue to be used. When a small publisher issued an unfavourable biography of Robert Maxwell, the publisher who, so they say, fell off the back of his yacht in the Mediterranean after plundering his employees' pension fund, Maxwell simply bought up the publishing house and put the offending title out of print. To have a book published in the West does not mean very much at all; publication demonstrates a world ostensibly free from censorship - but it is easy enough to decide not to

promote a book, to fail to make stock available, to forget to send out review copies, and so on. The West did not win the cold war by having a weaker control system than the eastern bloc.

I am not trying to say things were ideal in the days of the old gentlemen publishers. I'm not that convinced about the category of 'gentlemen', let alone convinced about the integrity of many of those operators. But in the simple fact that there were many publishers, that they were independent of each other, that they were involved primarily in publishing and were not lobbying for licenses for lotteries, television stations, casinos, airlines and so on, meant that they were less locked into governmental controls, less locked into doing deals. Up to a point.

So: the future of the book. Yes, the book will continue to be produced, books are a big, and profitable business, and it is a prime source of control. But as to what sort of books the future holds, well, I am not very optimistic about that. Nor do I think things will be any different in electronic publishing. The same handful of operators are already positioning themselves to control that information source. I will end with a quotation from Morris West's memoir *A View from the Ridge: The Testimony of a Pilgrim*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 1996*:*

> "Darkness" may seem an inapposite word for an epoch in which global communication is instantaneous and continuous. But sinister things are happening. More and more of the organs of communication are falling into fewer and fewer hands. The battle for the audience dollar to finance the networks is becoming so intense that the talents of the communicators are being suborned to serve the lowest common denominators of the audience. The power to impose a darkness of the intellect and call it light, is now an immediate fact. Because it exists, it can and will be used. Maybe we simple folk will have to do as the old Romans did - keep a gaggle of geese to warn us of the invaders.

Annals Australasia, 129, 9-10, November-December, 2018.

What About the Readers?

Catching the ferry in the mornings, I used to meet down at the wharf a distinguished, grizzled, bearded, nautical-hatted figure. He looked like a retired sea-captain, and such I assumed him to be. We would talk about nautical matters, boats, ferries, fairy penguins and such like. Occasionally we would talk about cultural matters, festivals and producers, about which he seemed to know rather more. It turned out of course that he wasn't a retired sea captain in his retired sea-captain's hat, any more than I was in my Breton fisherman's cap. He was an actor. Well, I should have guessed. Or rather he had originally been an actor. Then he had become head of NIDA, the National Institute of Dramatic Art. And then, after a number of years, he had asked himself what was the point of training Australian actors when there were no theatres for them to perform in. So he gave up teaching drama and turned to theatre architecture, designing new theatres and restoring old ones, laying the groundwork for the revival of Australian theatre.

I valued those morning talks with Tom Brown down at the ferry wharf. I have often brooded on them and on the way what he said and did have their relevance to the current situation of literature. Are we all too happily encouraging writers, offering courses in how to write and how to get published, courses which are satisfyingly well attended, when there is a marked shortage of readers to read the work of the writers? Or, in the words of the arts bureaucracies, what are we doing about audience development?

This is not to denigrate the workshops and seminars in creative writing. They are hugely popular. But if we do not actively develop audiences for literary works, it will be hard for writers to survive. Writers learn from other writers. Enrolling in workshops, attending classes and seminars offer one approach to the necessary skills for writing. But exposure to the work of other writers remains one of the most important ways of

developing literary expertise. You discover new ways of looking at things, you discover new subjects that our own culture has never thought suitable for literary treatment, you meet writers from other countries and learn from their experience, their difficulties, their struggles and their successes. Australia's literary traditions are in terms of time not long established; but in terms of the diversity of this multicultural society, they are uniquely rich and various. If we can be as open to literary input as we are to the varieties of international cuisine we so eagerly absorb, we could become a very rich literary culture.

This is especially important in the context of the collapse of literary studies in our schools and universities. As students are diverted away from studying the literary heritage into literary theory and creative writing and cultural studies and communications, as a study of literature is replaced with a study of movies and television, the underpinnings for a literate, literary culture are being systematically removed. The study of movies or television or video is a thoroughly worthwhile subject. The problem is that these new cultural studies syllabuses have been introduced not in addition to the study of literature, but into existing English literature syllabuses. There is only so much time devoted to 'English' and if that time has to accommodate film and television and video and cultural studies in general, the amount of literary study is inevitably lessened. It could have been possible to introduce communications and cultural studies as a separate subject, something in addition to literature. But that was not done. So we have the beginnings of a crisis for literature.

Newswrite.

How Popular Is Popular?

After decades of neglect by Australian publishers, popular genre writing has now become an increasingly significant part of publishers' lists. And yet there are still anxieties. At the Byron Bay Writers' Festival I chaired a session entitled 'Is Popular Bad?' The popular writers on the panel were adamant that it wasn't. Popular was good, they insisted. They weren't so keen on literature, however.

My own interest in the topic was somewhat different. I forget who it was, Gandhi maybe, who was asked what his views were on democracy in Britain. 'Democracy in Britain,' he said, 'yes, I think it would be a very good idea.' So popularity, popular books, popular television, yes, why not? A great idea. Let's have it.

The issue is that what we are told is popular often isn't. Take the bestseller lists. These are not necessarily what they purport to be, a significant index of what books are popular. What most of them record are the number of books sold into a handful of shops. Generally with bestseller lists, these books haven't yet been bought and indeed may never be.. They are sitting there in huge piles, waiting for customers. The marketing strategy is that if you have huge piles of books heaped at the front of the shop or on the counter, it will look like they are popular. What the shops are reporting is how many copies they have bought and want to sell. Quite often they don't sell. They have been bought on sale or return, and are returned, and then pulped. Publishers' admitted rates of returns and pulping vary between thirty and sixty per cent. Sometimes they were bought on hard sale, so the shops have every reason for continuing to report that they are bestsellers, otherwise they are stuck with them.

Print run figures are also extraordinarily suspect. Generally they are not released, not even to the authors. In France it used to be, and may still be, compulsory to indicate the size of a print run. Not here. These are the

dark mysteries of the book trade. So when the figures are announced - 'two hundred thousand copies initial print run in hard back' - we are entitled to be suspicious. Especially when you see the book discounted twenty-five per cent in shopping malls, department stores and your neighbourhood newsagent's within two or three weeks of publication. Massive discounts for bulk purchases help get stock out of the warehouses. It may seem like a variety of instant remaindering, but it hypes up the sales figures. The released print runs and advance sales figures - like the announced massive advances and contract fees - are all part of the sales hype and promotional campaign. The truth does not automatically emerge.

The way you get these sort of figures is by selling, or trying to sell, to the majority of the public who don't often buy books. When the books turn out to be unreadable, then this sort of pseudo-popular thing is bad, because it turn off people from wanting to buy books again. It damages the whole industry.

There is no reason to think that the popular is necessarily bad, of course. But every reason to wonder how popular it is. Popularity is increasingly a manufactured category, rather than an authentic response. Every month the major publishing groups publish their hundred or so titles, of which a dozen or so are 'lead titles'. Lead titles are that ones it has already been decided by the marketing people will be popular, these are the ones that get the special promotion - display boxes, dump bins, media promotion. The others sink or swim, survive their two or six months on the shelves and then if they haven't been sold are returned. So popularity is very much a matter of hype, of huge promotional budgets, as it is in the movies industry.

The movie *Pearl Harbour* received a generally negative critical reception. The press predicted it would lose millions. But the critical reception had little impact on box office receipts. The massive promotional campaign assured its high profile. As long as you get the stars' photographs on magazine covers, bus shelters, posters, in gossip columns etc etc, critical response is only a minor issue. It doesn't matter what you say as long as you spell my name right.

Is this bad? It's bad in one area. There is little room now, little hope of, that category of book called the sleeper. The book that received little promotion, no advertising, slow sales: but by word of mouth gained a reputation and in due course of time became a world-wide bestseller.

This is unlikely to happen now. Firstly, the book wouldn't stay in print without certain minimum sales. Changes in the tax law have made it unprofitable to keep a big back list. New accounting procedures calculate the cost of warehousing a book - what it costs just to have it sitting there. When warehousing costs exceed the income from sales, the book is likely to be pulped or remaindered. It makes economic sense. But it means books don't stay in print like they used to.

The problem is, who has time to explore what is good? How many book shops stock anything other than the commercially promoted, already manufacture-to-be-popular bestseller? Independent book shops account for around seventeen per cent of the Australian market. The chains and franchises increasingly move towards central buying - that is, one decision is made for all the shops, small presses need not apply. The publishing conglomerates that now dominate the industry have immense power in determining what shops sell. It is very hard for the few remaining small independent publishers to compete successfully.

But, I hear the objection, the public gets what it wants. Take television. Take television indeed. Take the ratings. Well, somebody did recently take the ratings and found that the ratings system that put one channel as number one had certain possibly flawed features, and another ratings system came in that gave a different result. Ratings are all based on sampling. The samples are often small and consequently misleading.

You might say, television ratings record what is happening, however. Well, up to a point. They record sets that are switched onto which channels Whether anybody is actively watching does not necessarily follow.

And anyway, so what if they are? Television is big business and it gives the people what they want. Really? One of the most popular soaps in the UK was *Crossroads,* but it was cancelled because its viewing audience was not the viewing audience the advertisers wanted: it was all kids and pensioners and single mothers, not those desirable people with disposable income. That is why you hardly see any Westerns on television any more. They were hugely popular, they got, and still can get, no doubt, vast audiences, but the audiences were young boys and old men - again, not an audience with disposable income to go and buy the advertised products.

To take a different sort of example, why is there so much sport on television. Is it because it is so immensely popular? Not necessarily. Sports programs are much cheaper to televise and present than drama. That is why there are so many of them. As for the drama we do get, it is not presented because it is necessarily popular. Certain programs have a proven popularity in the USA or UK markets. When the channels come to buy them, they have to buy a whole job lot from the producers, including programs that were not popular at all. The channel buys the job lot and can either not show the ones proven to be unpopular, or transmit them and promote them pretending they are popular.

No, popular does not mean bad. But is it really popular? Or is the alleged popularity merely a promotional fabrication?

Newswrite, 109 (October 2001).

Giving Up Reviewing

I made a resolution to give up book reviewing once again. It is very easy to give up, as Mark Twain remarked of giving up smoking: he had done it hundreds of times.

The trouble with book reviewing, my university tutor, Wallace Robson, used to say, was that it gave you a factitious sense of achievement. Something written. Not a book, not a story, not a poem, not an article, just a piece about something someone else has written. Which took a couple of days or evenings to read, anyway. And a day to draft the review and a day to write the final draft. Or half a day each, but it still takes up the best part of the day. You don't feel like writing a poem let alone a chapter of a novel in the hours that remain. When you realise how much time it take to write a review and how little you generally get paid for it, you vividly see the point of giving up reviewing yet once more.

But it has it appeals. Keeping a finger on the living pulse of literature and all that. Knowing what is coming out. The excitement of discovery.

When I began reviewing for *The Bulletin*, it seemed like the classic way to start a literary career. I walked into the office on Park Street and asked to see the reviews editor, Charles Higham, famous now for his biographies of movie stars and directors. It was an act of confidence, or stark insensibility, that I doubt I could manage now. I was a bit peeved that I was asked to write a trial review. I did it. It put me off Margaret Drabble's novels for years, having to write a review of her that was never published. Anyway, I passed the test and the books started to arrive. Recently I looked back through the files of *The Bulletin* for those years and I was amazed at the quality of the books I got to review. Norman Mailer, John le Carré, J. B. Priestley,

Raymond Chandler, A.D. Hope, Doris Lessing, Judah Waten, John Updike, Norman Podhoretz, John Cheever, Arthur Miller, John Osborne....

I was so proud that I took out a subscription to *The Bulletin* for my parents. My father wrote back that he was sorry at all the muck I had to read. Ah well! His reactions to my first book of stories was much the same. I remember a line from one of Tony Harrison's poems in which his mother says to him, 'And as for your poems, they're shit.'

But you don't write to please your parents. I remember Tom Keneally writing about a less than favourable review from Carl Harrison-Ford, that Carl was writing to please his old professors. I don't think that was true, in fact. It certainly didn't work, even if it was the intention. The professors at Sydney University were never very pleased about anything, let alone book reviews. Sam Goldberg firmly disapproved of them. I think that was one of the additional sources of pleasure I derived from reviewing for *The Bulletin* in those days, the annoyance factor. Even Andrew Riemer seemed less than enthusiastic. I remember being at a barbecue at his house, and his next door neighbour was much impressed that I was the reviewer R. M. Wilding of *The Bulletin.* Andrew didn't join in the accolades of admiration. The same neighbour had once cast doubt on the worth of Andrew's job as a lecturer in English.

'And what was he?' Andrew fulminated, 'a Hills hoist salesman.' Sometimes I feel that great Australian invention, the Hills hoist, has contributed more to general human well-being than a lot of university lectures. But all this was a long time ago, before Andrew had his by-line of chief reviewer in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Did that incident lurk in his subconscious and germinate late in life to inspire his new career? Probably not.

So there I was, reviewing for *The Bulletin*. It gave that factitious sense of achievement, a feeling of having a foothold on the ladder of literary ascent. As I put it in *Wildest Dreams*, 'it was the illusion of community, membership of the literary, the world-wide web of reading and writing and reviewing. An immaterial world of imaginings, of voices, of signs. I rarely met the reviews editor. Just the telephone conversations and the books with their little slips of copy paper and the scrawled deadline and word length. For years after these slips would flutter down to the floor as I opened one of those review books, the scribbled message bringing a brief flash of those times.'

Back in England, unemployed for a while, I wrote to Alan Ross, who had published a couple of my stories in *London Magazine* ,and asked if he could give me any reviewing. Generously he did, and again, it was an exciting range of material I reviewed for a couple of years: Christina Stead, Albert Jarry, Susan Sontag, Anna Kavan, Peter Weiss, Heinrich Böll, L.P. Hartley. But it was still the literary life at a remove - books coming

through the mail, the enjoyment of getting the new issue of the magazine with the review in print. But all very alienated. No long literary lunches. No face to face meetings. I knew the writers and the other reviewers only through the literary pages.

And then Claire Tomalin wrote from the *New Statesman* saying that she had enjoyed reading my reviews and would I be interested in regular novel reviewing for them. It was the breakthrough I had been hoping for. The way to literary success in London then, and probably still, was through reviewing for one of the literary weeklies or quality broadsheets. Regular reviewing for the *New Statesman* was the peak position.

But it was not to be. I had already resigned the lectureship I had acquired in Birmingham and was returning to Sydney. There was discussion about air-mailing me the books from England. But that seemed impossibly expensive and complicated to do in the England of those days. So the offer came to nothing.

I regretted the lost opportunity. Should I have withdrawn my resignation and stayed on at Birmingham? Just to do book reviews? It was the way into the literary world. But it was also a trap. One of the enemies of promise for the English writer, as Cyril Connolly had written and as his life demonstrated, was being distracted into regular reviewing. It made your reputation, provided a much better income than writing fiction or poetry, and kept your name in print week after week. But it became a treadmill from which it was hard to get the time or energy to write any book yourself. Reading all those novels, year after year, undermined your sense of your own literary identity, destroyed your confidence for writing your own work. And publishing collections of reprinted book reviews was hardly the same as writing a book. Sometimes I thought I had missed a big breakthrough, sometimes I thought I had been saved.

Thirty something years later, I still wrestle with the idea of book reviewing. A lure, a trap, a distraction, a lot of fun. But I am being firm. I have resolved to give it up. Until the next time.

Newswrite, 114 (April 2002).

On Syndication: Globalized Criticism

I was enjoying a literary lunch with a couple of former literary editors. They are not uncommon, former literary editors. Sometimes it seems that there are more of them than good literary lunches these days. The talk turned, as it will, to syndication. Was it a good thing that book reviews from overseas papers should be reprinted in the books pages of our metropolitan dailies?

Syndicated reviews are of course cheaper for the newspapers to run than commissioned new work. The argument that it is a bad thing is based on the way syndication deprives local reviewers of paid employment, and surrenders local critical acumen to the overseas variety. On the other hand, it gives local readers access to interesting, international material, which a lot of local readers feel is a good thing. Some people have both reactions, depending on whether they are wearing their writer's or their reader's hat at the time they are reading the paper.

The systematic removal of protection has been a characteristic of the last thirty years ever since Whitlam began removing tariffs. Should local reviewers be protected? Or should they go the way of industrial workers and dairy farmers and sugar cane farmers and banana farmers, and be surrendered to the triumph of globalization and free trade?

There are no local content requirements for newspapers or publishers in Australia. Unlike television, there is no industry protection. Nor is it generally argued that there should be. From the readers' point of view, being provided with an incisive piece by a top international writer has its undoubted appeals. To insist that the books pages or the features pages should consist solely of local content could arguably produce a narrow and

insular culture. But without some protection for local writers, will there be any Australian culture left? Will we end up swamped by the product of the Anglo-American chattering classes?

Certainly syndication can have its downside for the reader. To open your newspaper and find an article you have already read in the *Spectator* can be most annoying. The *Spectator* is readily available at the local newsagent. It is annoying to have read something and then to find it served up again in the Australian media. But to read something from overseas quality papers not available here, like *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* is a different matter. Generally it is well worth reprinting. The *New York Review of Books* is available at select bookstores for those who have time to read its lengthy essays, and does not need to be offered again. But America's *Nation* and *New Republic* and *American Spectator* are not available, and a chance sample their contents occasionally would be welcome.

But there again, as another literary editor put it to me, the *Spectator*'s circulation in Australia is small, so why should newspaper readers be deprived of its work? The *Spectator*'s reviewer is often much better qualified for a particularly English book. Also, he told me, so often the *Spectator* reviews a book which he wants to review but a copy of the book has not been received, even though it is already in the local shops. Rather than wait for the long process of getting the book, getting it out, waiting for the review and then the two week publication cycle, he grabs the *Spectator*'s review. Occasionally the syndicated piece may not seem very good at all. But that has its own satisfactions. For years one of the pleasures of listening to visiting academics at universities and visiting writers at writers' festivals was the realization that what you were hearing was rather shoddy. It was a realization that did wonders for dissolving the old cultural cringe.

Perhaps reviews by expatriate Australians would be deemed more acceptable. Over the years Australia's international treasures showered their insights and radiance across the British press: Barry Humphries, Clive James, Germaine Greer, John Pilger, Philip Knightley, Bruce Page, Margaret Walters, Peter Conrad. You may not have agreed with their views; indeed, it would be hard to agree with each and all of them. But it can be interesting to see what they have been up to, and we are only seeing a fragment of it. After all, what they are writing about is news in itself for their numerous Australian readers.

Of course, local writers might feel more sympathetic to syndication if it were a two way traffic, and reviewers and features from the Australian press were reprinted in the UK and the USA on a regular basis. If Australian soaps can be exported, why not our more rarified after-shave lotions?

It was an enjoyable lunch. For a while argument became heated over whether we should order an imported Italian white or a local Australian vintage. In the end we settled for a bottle of each. As Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley used to say in the *Spectator* some three hundred years ago, 'Much might be said on both sides.'

I think that is what we decided about syndication in the end.

Weekend Australian, Review, 18-19 December 2004; *Newswrite*, 148, June 2005.

The Decline of the Books Pages

For a while now the books pages have been running regular reports on the death of literary fiction and the decline of the teaching of Australian literature and such like. But what about the slow death of the literary pages? Or, more specifically, the decline of book reviewing?

I am not here referring to quality. As an on-again off-again reviewer over the decades, I am not about to be tempted to malign my colleagues in the field. No, the issue is the one enshrined in the old rag-trade saying, 'Never mind the quality, what about the length?'

When I began reviewing for *The Bulletin* in the 1960s, there were four pages devoted to books. Then there were two. Then just one. Until it finally ceased publication like those other journals of opinion that once ran reviews, *Nation, Nation Review, National Times*, the *Independent* and more, all now defunct. Nor is there any longer much books coverage in the Sunday papers.

The quality weekend newspapers are now the major reviewing media, but they have similarly cut back their space, if not quite as dramatically. Fairfax abolished the *Sydney Morning Herald* reviews editorship and now runs the reviews edited by the Melbourne *Age* in the *Herald.* It is a world-wide phenomenon.

The factors behind the shrinkage are various. There is a suspicion of the very concept of the 'literary.' When I wanted to call a novel of mine *The Literary Pages*, the publisher refused. The word literary was the kiss of death, he assured me. But even if we now call the literary pages the books pages, the problem remains.

Australian publishing is a billion-dollar business, but it has rarely been a big spender on advertising. And without book advertisements, the books editors find it hard to retain their traditional space, let alone beg for more. At the same time other media - DVDs, music, movies, television - are commanding more attention in

the arts and entertainment section, and encroach on the space traditionally the preserve of books. And then there are designers, the traditional enemy of the written word. They love to bring in more white space and more visuals. With the development of full-colour printing in newspapers, and the consequent need to make use of it, their mission in life is being fulfilled. 'A picture's worth a thousand words,' the cartoonist Bruce Petty used to say to me cheerfully. I was not amused.

As space is cut back, the number of books reviewed becomes fewer. One strategy has been to resort to shorter notices. As the broadsheets redesign their arts sections into tabloid format, that rambling spaciousness beloved of old-school reviewers is increasingly replaced by something all too close to the sound-bites of the electronic media. Certainly those remorseless, lengthy *New York Review of Books* reviews could be hard to take, and rarely finished. But what author enjoys being relegated to the short notices round-up?

Even the literary quarterlies and scholarly journals are struggling in Australia. Here the issue is different, less shortage of space than the difficulty of finding reviewers. University research funding is now allocated in complex ways, with large rewards for academics and institutions who have landed large grants reigning supreme, and some reward for those who publish articles and even books. But no points are given for writing a book review, whether in newspapers or in scholarly journals. As for collecting your reviews into a book, that doesn't score either, since it is categorized as reprinted material. So there are no incentives to write book reviews for contemporary academics, and contemporary academics are as incentive driven as anyone.

Does it matter? Do reviews sell books? No one seems to know. It is the received wisdom of the trade that what sells books is word-of-mouth recommendation. But to get word-of-mouth recommendation, you need the existence of the book to be known. At the very least book reviews inform the public of that. And to quote the ancient wisdom yet again, 'It doesn't matter what they say, as long as they spell my name correctly.'

Yet some of the best-selling commercial fiction rarely gets reviewed at all: romances, family sagas, crime, and boys' toys mayhem. Or, if mentioned, it receives only brief, and often dismissive, notices. I once chaired a session at a writers' festival where the popular writers unanimously lamented the lack of reviewing attention their work received, and produced from pockets close to their hearts examples of the contemptuous comments they had received on the rare occasions their books were noticed. Given their substantial sales, I was surprised they cared. And as far as publishers are concerned, it doesn't matter. 'Just chuck them in a bin at the front of the shop, they sell themselves,' one publisher said to me.

There are now, of course, web sites offering reviews. And never forget the blogs. Their champions claim they democratize reviewing, taking it out of the hands of an elite minority. I have yet to access any of them. I spend long enough each day on my computer, writing and emailing. I like to relax in an armchair to read the

review pages. And if it's a bad review, I can simply rip up the offending paper and cast it on the fire. Throwing the laptop through the window is too expensive to do that often.

Weekend Australian, Review (29 December 2007– 4 January 2008); *Newswrite*, (March 2008).

The Attack on Voluntarism

For some twenty-two years at the University of Sydney I was involved with a small publishing project, *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture*. The historian Soumyen Mukherjee had been instrumental in setting up a society, the Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture. The aim had been to provide a cross-disciplinary forum so that literary critics, historians, anthropologists and social scientists could meet and discuss issues that extended beyond the narrow boundaries of their departments. Departmental boundaries were as closely guarded in those days as any contemporary border security operation. It wouldn't do to have political scientists talking to literary types, historians getting together with political scientists. The Association confronted these taboos and arranged talks, seminars and conferences. The proceedings of the conferences were published. Hence the publishing project.

Gradually we moved from publishing conference proceedings to original books. Monographs they were called in those days. By this time the university press had been closed down, along with many another university press. Governmental policy had led to the running down of the humanities, staff numbers dramatically dropping, student enrolments drastically reduced, as the new world order directed the young into economics, law, business studies and computer science.

As a consequence of this, traditional scholarly publishers had begun to shy away from the traditional humanities because the market had become so small. I remember the arts editor of Cambridge University Press expressing surprise and admiration, the former especially, for what we were doing. Four hundred copies was now the expected sale of a work of literary criticism he told me. Internationally. Not long afterwards Craig

Munro of University of Queensland Press told me two hundred copies were as many as you might expect to sell of a book on Australian literature.

We used to print a thousand copies and sold most of them. The money received from conference enrolments and the association's membership was used to fund the books. When conferences became fewer and we published more original monographs, we sought subsidies from the university, the Australian Academy of the Humanities and such like sources. Any profits made on individual books went back into the bank account to fund the next titles. No one got paid. The authors received no royalties, though they were given lots of free copies to send to colleagues in their fields, spread the word, get reviews, hand out as Christmas presents. None of us took any money for the time spent on the myriad of tasks of commissioning and writing readers' reports, editing, proof-reading and publishing. It was all very hand to mouth. I would meet the printer in the university staff club and hand over camera-ready copy, deliver the books to Paul Brennan, our distributor, in the boot of my car.

Over twenty-two years we published twenty-two titles. We received excellent reviews, in scholarly journals, the *Times Literary Supplement,* and the *Australian Book Review.* We arranged co-publishing in the United Kingdom and India. And then it all came to an end. The reforms in tax law, the introduction of the GST, the introduction of the ABN, made it all unfeasible. None of us had the time, energy or expertise to comply with the new requirements of quarterly reporting, of audited accounts. Nor could we afford to pay to have these tasks done. The whole operation was run on a shoe-string.

And so, regretfully, we decided to call it a day, pack it in, close down the association, take early retirement. The university staff club where we met the printer had already been closed down. Sydney Studies in Society and Culture, the name of the series we published, came to an end. A consequence of new governmental legislation.

Much has been said recently about the law of unintended consequences. A political action in one area produces unfortunate consequences in another. Governmental requirements had made a centuries old tradition of voluntary activity impossible to sustain. Voluntarism was now to be replaced by professionalism: except that in many cases it was not replaced, it simply ceased to exist.

I was reminded of this by a report from England. The drum and pipe band that had performed at a village remembrance day ceremony for nearly forty years had been closed down. Health and Safety regulations insisted on a higher proportion of adults to children than the band could guarantee. Charles Moore remarked in the *Spectator* (27 October, 2007) on 'how painful regulation is for any organisation which exists on a thin

margin. It is the natural condition of most small local societies to lack money, legal expertise, clerical time and spare bodies.'

Are these unintended consequences? Or is it all part of the remorseless imposition of control and monopolisation on every aspect of individual life? Large organisations, major commercial enterprises, can absorb the cost of quarterly reporting, auditing, health and safety, environmental and other government requirements. But voluntary organisations, small presses, little magazines, and learned societies are gradually being squeezed out of existence. The amateur and the voluntary are being replaced by the professional, the global, the corporate.

This is especially the case in scholarly publishing, which insofar as it survives is being increasingly driven into the control of global monopolies. As Colin Steele wrote in the *Australian's* Higher Education section (31 October, 2007), 'In 2006, 20 publishers accounted for 84 per cent of revenues of the $US11 billion publishing market in science, technology and medicine. The top five STM publishers account for 50 per cent of the market. Who loses? Smaller publishers, academic societies and academic monograph publishing.'

Sydney Studies was one of the publishing projects that lost. Its demise was symptomatic of the way the variety of our cultural and political expression is being reduced. Sometimes you have to wonder whether this is not an unintended consequence at all, but part of an overriding plan.

Wet Ink, 12 (Spring 2008).

Australians Deserve Cheaper Books

Books are very expensive in Australia. They have been for decades. The Productivity Commission research report *Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books* (June 2009; available at www.pc.gov.au) found that in 2007-08 a selection of around 350 trade books sold in Australia were on average 35 per cent more expensive than like editions sold in the US (even after accounting for the effects of GST). In many case, the price difference was greater than 50 per cent. And when the Commission extended the range of editions of titles that it was comparing, the price differences widened further (xviii).

The same books in the same language. Fluctuating exchange rates of course alter the figures. In 2008-9, when the Australian dollar was lower against the US dollar, the commission compared recommended retail prices. It found 'the RRP of matched editions was on average 12 per cent higher than the RRP of like editions in the US, with the difference exceeding 25 per cent for more than a one-sixth of titles.'

The Productivity Commission recommended that parallel importing restrictions (PIRs) should be lifted, and retailers should be allowed to access these cheaper books directly from overseas.

Kevin Rudd's Labor government announced its rejection of the recommendation on 11 November, 2009. It was a day with a number of resonances - Armistice day, marking the end of the 1914-18 war, the day of Ned Kelly's execution, and the day of the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975.

This governmental refusal of the recommendations of commissioned reports has a long, consistent history. In 1989 the Prices Surveillance Authority noted that book prices were higher in Australian than in the UK and USA and recommended that the book market should be opened. It updated its report in 1995,

noting again that prices continued to be higher in Australia than in the UK and USA. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission reports of 1999 and 2001 both recommended that the parallel importing laws be removed. In 2000 the Intellectual Property and Competition Review Committee concluded that the costs of removing the restrictions were likely to be small relative to the gains to Australia. In 2001 the majority report of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee recommended that legislation to remove the restrictions proceed to parliament. All these recommendations were refused. (*Restrictions on the Parallel Importation of Books*, 1. 1.)

If books were cheaper, we could afford to buy them more often. We would read more. It sounds like an excellent idea. Yet there has been an extraordinary amount of opposition to this proposal. The reading public would benefit enormously, so who would be disadvantaged?

A handful of Australian writers have publishers in the USA and UK as well as in Australia. The overseas editions of their books are considerably cheaper. Why should not the Australian reader have access to the cheaper edition? It is claimed that if these overseas editions are imported, the authors will suffer. But the author still gets a royalty, even if a smaller one.

If the books have been remaindered, they would be even cheaper for a local retailer to import. In that case, the authors might not get a royalty. But that is an issue for the authors to raise with their publishers. Have a clause in their contracts requiring their publishers to pulp rather than remainder, or to offer better royalty terms. Change publishers.

The advantage of cheaper books across the board for all readers surely far outweighs the interests of a handful of vocal writers. And most of the writers benefiting from higher book prices are not Australian anyway. The Commission reported 'indicative Commission estimates suggest that the additional income flowing overseas is around 1.5 times that retained by local copyright holders. In effect, PIRs impose a private, implicit tax on Australian consumers which is used largely to subsidize foreign copyright holders.' (xx-xxi)

One significant area that would be affected is rebadging. An Australian publisher buys the rights of an overseas title, sticks a local imprint on the already formatted pdf, and sells the book at Australian prices. This is the practice of all of the major multinationals operating here, and of independents like Allen & Unwin, Text, and Scribe. The original edition, if it were imported from the USA or UK, could be a lot cheaper, even after freight costs.

It is argued that the Australian publishers of these overpriced local editions would suffer if this practice ended. Their sales and profits would drop, and they would no longer be able to afford to nurture and

maintain the rich heritage of Australian literary culture. But how much nurturing and maintaining of Australian culture do they do? How committed are they to continuing to publish literature in the strict sense? How much of that rich heritage of the past have they kept in print? In the globalized, user pays, accountant driven business of contemporary media corporations, not a lot. And how much of the multinational publishers' profit is repatriated to parent companies in the USA, UK, Germany and France, and how much is ploughed back into the local branch?

Australian publishing is dominated by multinational conglomerates. The Productivity Commission reported 'Commission estimates based on Nielsen BookScan data indicate that around 60 per cent of the total revenue from trade book sales in 2007-08 accrued to titles published by the top 10 publishers and thereby mainly to titles released by multinational publishers.' (2.17)

These multinational media corporations have high overheads. Many are debt laden. They are under pressure to return profits and those expectations have been ramped up. In the past publishers returned eight per cent; now the publishing divisions of the media corporations are expected to return fifteen per cent.

Corporate publishing cannot make any money on those small print runs of a thousand copies on which the literary tradition is built. Those were the print runs of a new novel by Henry James or Joseph Conrad at the height of their powers. Australian poets like Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall were published in editions of five hundred copies, and most remained unsold. The major trade publishers in Australia have long since abandoned publishing poetry. The initial sales of such literary and cultural product – poetry, short stories, drama, literary fiction – are rarely sufficient for corporate publishers to publish extensively in this area. Consequently the innovative literary, historical and cultural publishing is increasingly the business of a few small and independent publishers that each publish a handful of titles a year in small print runs.

Literary publishing and the cultural heritage comprise only a very small part of the publishing industry. When issues of book pricing and GST are raised, the argument is often conducted as if all books were, in Milton's words, the precious life-blood of a master spirit. Or mistress spirit, these days. Most are not. The Productivity Commission's report noted 'while much media attention is devoted to fiction writing (including genres such as science fiction, romance and mystery), around three-quarters of trade books sold are non-fiction books.' (2.4). Most are computer manuals and business handbooks and self-help guides and soft porn and cookery books and travel guides and gardening manuals and politicians' memoirs and celebrity biographies. Trade books comprise 60 per cent of the market, educational books comprise the remaining 40 per cent of book sales in Australia.

A figure of 60 per cent is often bandied around as the percentage of Australian books sold each year in Australia. But this figure includes books by overseas authors manufactured in Australia. The National Library of Australia estimates that only 11% of books published in Australia each year are by Australian authors. Of that eleven per cent, somewhere between half a per cent and 2 per cent would be works of literary and cultural significance.

It is all legitimate business and it is hard to see why free market forces should not be allowed to prevail in importing and pricing. Why should we pay higher prices for ninety-eight per cent of our books in order to sustain the two per cent or less of literary and cultural titles? And is it in fact the case that the higher prices serve to generate profits that then cross-subsidize the literary titles? Cross-subsidization is rarely business practice today. Each title is expected to stand on its own. The multinationals publish, and will continue to publish, a handful of Australian writers who can achieve significant market presence. Many of these are successful genre writers – crime, romance, historical saga. They are part of the entertainment industry. Only time will tell how many of them will retain any literary or cultural significance.

As Ivor Indyk says: 'I've been puzzled by how the big publishers and celebrity authors have been arguing that parallel importation is going to be the death of Australian literature when they do so little for Australian literature (in the strict sense) themselves.'

Throughout the last decade the literary pages of the broadsheet newspapers have run recurrent stories on the death of the novel and the decline of literary publishing. Agents and writers have time and time again reported on how they have been unable to place serious literary fiction with any of the major publishers, how corporate publishers say that there is not enough money to be made from literary fiction or poetry, so authors in those areas are dropped from their lists. Academics and students have lamented at conferences and in the press the failure by publishers to keep the Australian literary heritage in print. A reconstituted Sydney University Press has initiated a series of reprints of classic Australian literature that have been let fall out of print. Ivor Indyk's Giramondo is one of the small independent presses that has made a point of picking up major writers dropped from the lists of the large corporate publishers. It is with through such small, independent presses that Australian literature is currently sustained.

Insofar as there would be losers if restrictions on parallel importing were removed, those likely to suffer most are the small presses. These presses cannot achieve economies of scale in large print runs, or beneficial printing and trucking contracts, so their unit costs, and hence their RRPs, are high. High book prices suit them, since this means that their own product does not look uncompetitive. Reduce book prices overall and they will be struggling.

These small presses have suffered over the years from various governmental decisions. GST is the notorious example. The ten percent goods and services tax on the retail price of books and magazines increased the price to the consumer of items that were already more expensive than in the USA or UK. It also added a further burden to small, independent Australian publishers and booksellers. Large global corporations can afford to introduce systems and to employ accountants and auditors to service their widespread activities. But the one or two person small presses, little magazines or independent bookshops struggle to find the time, energy, expertise or finance to handle the paperwork for this and other financial reporting now required. In Britain books are exempt from VAT, value added tax, the equivalent of GST. But not in Australia.

For years Australia Post offered a concessional printed matter postage rate, significantly lower than parcel post. But this category has been abolished. It is now ridiculously expensive to mail a book as a gift. And it is punitively expensive for small publishers who rely on the postal service for distribution. The global conglomerates can afford alternatives like contracts with couriers and trucking companies. Once again the smaller independent Australian publishers and booksellers are penalized. And the consumer suffers, as the bookseller passes on the postal cost to the consumer. The USA still retains preferential printed matter postage rates. But not Australia.

Distribution remains a major problem for these small presses. Although the Australia Council offers publications subsidies to some of these books, the Council has never been able to achieve anything to facilitate distribution. Unlike the UK and the USA, Australia does not have book wholesalers. If wholesalers emerged (as they would with the removal of import restrictions), then the small presses would benefit. Single copy orders could be bundled together with other orders from other presses to deliver to the bookseller.

Printing and paper costs are much higher in Australia than in the USA or Asia. The book bounty once provided subsidies to offset high Australian printing costs, but it has been abolished. Perhaps it should be restored. There is arguably a better case for reintroducing the book bounty than for prohibiting the importation of cheaper books.

Those small presses that have successfully sold rights to books they initiated could experience problems. Zoe Dattner of Sleepers Publishing raises the issue of ‘a novel that's doing very well and has been bought in the US and the UK. If that book were to be reintroduced into Australia via Random House and Harvill Secker (as it's being published by in the US and UK), they would completely blow us out of the water with

their massive marketing budgets and brand awareness. There'd be no point in us having our version on the shelves at all.'

Such small presses and literary publishers as survive have a case. Their problems are specific and could readily be addressed. That is the sort of thing the Australia Council was established to deal with. Enhanced support for these presses in publication and printing subsidies and in provision of distribution assistance, is something that would benefit the maintenance and continuation of Australian literary and cultural publishing.

Overall the issue is becoming an increasingly abstract one, anyway. More and more Australian readers now purchase on-line from overseas in order to provide themselves with the cheaper books that the refusal of parallel importing here denies them. By-passing local editions and local booksellers, they take advantage of cheaper prices, discounts, free delivery, and no GST. This is really hurting local booksellers. The growth of e-books has further diverted trade away from bookshops. As in Britain and the USA, the number of independent bookshops is in significant decline. And as they go out of business, quality writing from the struggling small presses becomes increasingly hard to access; it is certainly not represented in the chain-stores and supermarkets. In protecting the Australian printing industry and the multi-national publishers' local branches, the Australian government has effectively undercut the base of literary culture in Australia.

Sydney Morning Herald, 17 July, 2009, revised and expanded.

The Yorick Club

The Yorick Club was established in Melbourne in 1868, providing a focus for literary talk and late night drinking for writers and journalists like Marcus Clarke, Henry Kendall, Adam Lindsay Gordon, and other luminaries. It had its origins in the Saturday night gatherings arranged by Frederick Haddon, the editor of the daily *Argus*, at his lodgings in Spring Street. When he moved into rooms in Collins Street there was no suitable large room for the Saturday night meetings.

Initially the group moved to Nissen's Café in Bourke Street, but the regulars there objected to the noise they made, so a room was rented for £1 a week in the *Punch* office, 74 Collins Street. The *Argus* office was next door. Mueller's tavern below catered for the club until two o'clock in the morning, after which it stayed open until four or five o'clock for newspaper printers.

The first official meeting of the club was held 1 May, 1868. Dr Patrick Maloney, a friend of Clarke's and at this time an intern at Melbourne Hospital, gave Clarke a skull which Clarke brought to the club room and placed on the mantelshelf with a pipe under its jaw. Clarke suggested the club should be called the 'Golgotha' because it was 'the place of skulls.' According to the official *Reminiscences of the Yorick Club* he 'hammered away at the idea all night,' but the club ended up being called the Yorick – an allusion not only to *Hamlet* but to Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy.* Nonetheless when Clarke and Kendall came to write about it, they called it the Golgotha.

In the end Clarke got very huffy, took his skull and disappeared, not returning for some days. He gave the skull to the actor Walter Montgomery, who was playing Hamlet at the Theatre Royal, and used it in the famous soliloquy, 'Alas, poor Yorick'.

Clarke himself wrote about the club in his 'Peripatetic Philosopher' column in the *Australasian*, 2 May, 1868. 'Everybody wants to know the secrets of the prison-house, and as Timmins, one of our number, incautiously told his wife that we keep a skull on the mantelshelf, there is much suspicion and terror around. I may briefly mention, however, that the story of the newspaper lad being scraped to death with oyster shells at a late supper, and buried in the back kitchen, is not absolutely true in all its details; also I may, without breaking faith, refute the accusation made by a friend, that the members sit on tubs round the room, smoke green tea, and drink neat kerosene out of pewter pots. More I cannot reveal.'

It is a wonder that he could reveal anything, since the first official meeting had occurred only the previous day; and the article would have had to have been written two days before that in order to meet the *Australasian*'s deadline. But Clarke had a cavalier attitude to journalism. He lost his staff job on the *Argus* for reviewing a performance that, it turned out, never took place.

Henry Kendall, who moved to Melbourne from Sydney the following year, described his first visit to the club: 'Facing the landing an old door opened into an aromatic room, which, I was informed, did duty as "the reading, talking and smoking-den". The most remarkable items of its furniture were the spittoons – useful utensils in their way no doubt, but distressingly plentiful and palpable at the Golgotha. Passing through a suggestive lavatory, we entered the library, where I found a stock-in-trade, consisting of a couple of desks, four or five chairs, a table, two shelves bristling with ancient magazines and effete blue-books, certain other sundries of a doubtful character, and a melancholy waiter. An apartment, called by courtesy the dining-room, and devoted principally to a brace of dissipated newspaper reporters, was the only other feature that arrested a somewhat disappointed stranger's attention.'

Clarke provided an account of what the Yorick Club members did *not* do. But what exactly did they do? Haddon's Saturday evenings used to offer a mixed bill of stories, songs and excellent brandy. The Yorick Club seems to have added a certain vociferousness to these occasions. Its *Reminiscences* record that Adam Lindsay Gordon at times was wildly jovial, and one evening pitched Clarke up to very near the ceiling and caught him again coming down. The journalist and novelist, G.A. Walstab, was an early exponent of face-painting. He specialized in taking coals from the fire in the early morning, and blackening the faces of the members dozing in their chairs or beneath the tables. Another journalist, Clarke's friend Alfred Telo, brought back from the Pacific islands a collection of long spears, and one night these were used in a piece of Dadaist street theatre to

lift from their hooks the gilded hats hung out as signs by Melbourne hatters. Another favourite game was collecting brass door-knobs. Telo particularly prized one he had stolen from the theatre critic James Neild. Neild wrote a letter to the *Argus* denouncing 'the idiots who could find nothing better to do than to wrench off citizens' knockers' – only to find the following morning that his house had been decorated with a fishing rod and a gilt fish, a pawnbroker's sign, and an undertaker's board.

The Yorick club was a place for relaxation, for company, for networking. In origin its members were primarily literary and journalistic – editors, journalists, poets, novelists, reviewers, dramatists. Some were on staff, others freelance. It was a place to trade information on who was publishing what where, a way of arranging introductions to get work, a way of arranging notice, publicity and puffs. In the end it became too successful. The poets and journalists were outnumbered by the bankers and businessmen. Clarke and a few old bohemians went off to form a new group, 'The Cave of Adullam.' In the meantime Gordon had shot himself, unable to pay the printer for his last book of poems. Kendall returned to Sydney, forged a cheque and was incarcerated in Gladesville asylum for opiate addiction. G.A. Walstab was declared bankrupt, and Marcus Clarke soon followed him. The Yorick Club survived until 1966, when it was absorbed into the Savage Club, which still preserves some of its earliest records.

The Athenæum Club

Athenæum Club Melbourne: A new history of the early years 1868-1918, by Paul de Serville. Athenæum Club, Melbourne, 2013.

In mid-1868 two new clubs were established in Melbourne, the Athenæum and the Yorick. Plans for the Athenæum were under way by April when the proprietor, the architect J. G. Knight, advertised for staff and for tradesmen to begin renovations of the building he had leased in Collins Street. A prospectus was sent out to the press and 2 May 1868 *The Age* and the *Herald* announced: 'The special aim of the founders of the club is to promote social and kindly intercourse between persons of kindred tastes and dispositions, and to establish a common ground on which gentlemen of intelligence and character may meet together irrespective of class distinctions or personal wealth.' The same day Marcus Clarke wrote about the Yorick in *The Australasian*: 'I heard something about a literary club being established the other day. The subject was mooted a long time ago. I hope that it will come to the birth. May I suggest, however, as a peripatetic and an impartial observer, that it should be confined, not perhaps to absolute *literary* men, but to men of some pretensions to knowledge of literature.'

The Yorick is remembered in literary contexts through the membership of Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall, and from Hugh McCrae's colourful account of it in *The Bulletin*, reprinted in *My Father and My Father's Friends*. It had a distinctively Bohemian aura, which Clarke was concerned to highlight. 9 May Clarke wrote in *The Australasian*: 'as Timmins, one of our number, incautiously told his wife that we

keep a skull on the mantelshelf, there is much suspicion and terror abroad. I may briefly mention, however, that the story of the newspaper lad being scraped to death with oyster shells at a late supper, and buried in the back kitchen, is not absolutely true in all its details; also, I may, without breaking faith, refute the accusation made by a friend, that the members sit on tubs around the room, smoke green tea, and drink neat kerosene out of pewter pots. More I cannot reveal.'

The Athenæum's splendid premises were described at length in *The Argus*, 29 June: 'The dining-hall itself, which has a very elegant appearance, is 55 ft. long by 30 ft. broad, and is arranged somewhat in the style of a café, with tables to seat parties of eight, well lighted by an open-framed lantern-roof, the beams of which are decorated with red and gold; and with its lofty walls, coloured green of a particularly delicate shade, the room has a very cheerful aspect, while a further agreeable effect is produced by an ornamental border of mauve and red, carried round the walls at their union with the ceiling.'

The Yorick was rather different. Henry Kendall described being taken there by Clarke: 'He popped into a dingy passage leading towards what appeared to be a bill-sticker's back skillion. About half way up this corridor there loomed through the darkness a narrow, suspicious-looking flight of stairs. At the foot of this my little friend paused, and instructed me to follow him, warning me at the same time to be careful of the steps. Careful I certainly was, but a more villainous ladder I never ascended. However, we scrambled to the top, and lo! ... Facing the landing an old door opened into an aromatic room, which, I was informed, did duty as "the reading, talking and smoking-den." The most remarkable items of its furniture were the spittoons – useful utensils in their way no doubt, but distressingly plentiful and palpable ...'

Nearly half the foundation members of the Yorick were also members of the Athenæum – including the journalists and newspaper men Marcus Clarke, James Smith, James Neild, Charles Bright, George Walstab, Alfred Telo, Thomas Carrington, F.W. Haddon and G.C. Levey. Initially, de Serville writes of the Athenæum, 'the original membership had a strong scientific and literary representation.' Journalists and doctors had a significant presence. Gradually it defined itself. Less posh and expensive than the Melbourne club, less Bohemian than the Yorick, it attracted politicians 'which made the club unusual, and marked the start of a long association between the Athenæum and Melbourne's political world.' The business world was well represented with 'a large group of merchants, warehousemen, agents and brokers of all kinds – stock and station agents, mining brokers, sharebrokers – as well as mining men and auctioneers.' There were comparatively few pastoralists, but a substantial number of racing men like Captain Standish, Herbert Power and Thomas Lyttleton.

Its early history was shaky. In 1871 it temporarily closed, reopening under a new proprietor, James Hay. At a later crisis, the committee took over ownership in 1918. Over the years it grew from strength to strength and still survives. The Yorick was absorbed by the Savage Club in 1966.

The early records of the Athenæum are incomplete and sometimes meagre, but de Serville has supplemented them by drawing on contemporary newspaper reports and memoirs to provide an invaluable account of the club's history, which he sets in the larger history of Victoria's development. He has exhaustively identified the members from the few surviving lists, and provided succinct biographical and genealogical details of their professional and commercial interests and their family connections, illuminated with telling anecdotes that bring them alive. Beautifully produced, *Athenæum Club* is generously illustrated with contemporary portraits and photographs of members and of Melbourne street scenes and architecture. De Serville carefully explores the club's early tribulations in the context of Melbourne's recession of the mid 1860s and the collapse of the land boom and the consequent bank closures of the mid 1890s. As he pointedly remarks, whereas parts of Melbourne society frowned on gambling at the race track, they were deeply involved in gambling with mining shares and property speculations. The fortunes of many of the Athenæum members were intimately involved. Many were ruined. The pastoralist Hugh Glass had debts of half a million pounds in 1869 and 'died of an overdose of chloral, administered at his request by his son.' In the collapse of the land boom in the early 1890s the solicitor Theodore Fink twice made a secret composition, 'a confidential means by which an individual could make arrangements with his creditors which remained unknown to the world'; he survived, in due course becoming chairman of the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd. Henry Gyles Turner, whose recollections of Marcus Clarke usually included a rebuke for Clarke's financial improvidence, was chairman of the Commercial Bank when it collapsed as a result of its extensive loans to building societies and land banks. The journalist James Smith lost his entire savings.

As Geoffrey Blainey writes in his foreword, 'Paul de Serville has now written more than anybody in Australia – and maybe in England too – on the themes of clubs and their members.' His *Port Phillip Gentlemen* and *Pounds and Pedigrees* brilliantly anatomized the nineteenth century middle and upper-class society of Victoria and its membership of the Melbourne, Athenæum, Yorick and other clubs. They are essential reading for any serious student of nineteenth century Australian history and culture. With his genealogical expertise and his antiquarian care for detail, De Serville has not only provided an always fascinating and readable account of that milieu, but has also provided a uniquely rich source of detailed information for future historians, biographers and cultural commentators concerned to establish spheres of influence, and the possibilities of contact, who was likely to have known or met whom. The enduring myth

of Australia as a democratic and egalitarian society has produced its labour history and social historians. But fully to understand the complexity of Australia's past and development, its political and economic establishment needs comparable examination. The Athenæum was one of those clubs that catered for that establishment.

(*Quadrant*, 57, 10, October 2013)

Libraries under threat

At the beginning of the twenty-first century Central Queensland University began a process of expansion. Like a number of regional universities, it began opening campuses in other cities beyond its Rockhampton base. When it opened a campus on the Gold Coast, David Myers moved the editorial offices of the CQU Press there. I used to visit him as we planned a series of anthologies of new writing. He showed me round the campus. The first university campus we had ever encountered without a library. We thought it was a bizarre aberration. We had no idea this was the way of the future. It was a significant departure from Thomas Carlyle's insight in 'The Hero as Man of Letters': 'all that a university can do for us is teach us to *read.* Once invent printing, you metamorphosed all universities, or superseded them. The true university of these days is a collection of books.'

The destruction of the libraries of the English speaking world has been underway for a quarter of a century. It dates from the Reagan-Thatcher regime of the 1980s, the introduction of economic rationalism and the payback for the student activism of the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the anti-war and anti-segregation protest came, it was believed, from students enrolled in English, History, Philosophy and other subjects grouped under 'Arts' or 'Humanities'. These departments were cut back in size, losing three quarters of their teaching staff, and a comparable reduction in student numbers. Australia dutifully followed these American and British initiatives

The shift to an increasingly vocational model for universities, with huge expansion in Education, Computer and IT and Business studies, had its flow on effect on the Arts. These vocational subjects, together with science and economics, are not generally concerned with the historical record. Their focus is primarily on current practice and theories. And so, when libraries began purging their shelves of books, they were unconcerned.

The Arts and Humanities, reduced in numbers, no longer had much influence on university policy. With the gradual erosion of tenure and an employment model of short term contracts, another policy of the Thatcher-Reagan reaction, the remaining academics in those areas seem to have been silenced. In 2011 I wrote a piece in *Quadrant* about the destructive changes to Fisher library at the University of Sydney. (It is reprinted in my *Wild About Books.*) Paul Comrie-Thompson interviewed me at length on ABC radio. A number of retired academics and librarians from around Australia contacted me with details of further library disasters, and I have drawn on their information in this article. But at Sydney University there was almost universal silence.

In 1993 Zoilus, a small press in London, published a novel, *The Surleighwick Effect* by Charles H. Cutting. The author's name was a pseudonym, concealing the identity of a distinguished scholar, Jim Binns, who had been outraged by two library scandals in Britain. In order to fill the hole in its finances the John Rylands library in Manchester had begun selling off very rare books, some of them overseas. It was a betrayal of the library's function and attracted some press notice. Then the University of Birmingham closed down its Shakespeare Institute library, shifted some of the books to another, smaller, Institute building in Stratford-upon-Avon, and disposed of the rest. These events form the basis of *The Surleighwick Effect.* The librarian of the University of Surleighwick 'was a very modern librarian, so he was not interested in books.... Dr Pratt envisaged a time, not far off now, when all the books in the world would have been optically scanned and stored on a computer. The scholar who wished to read a book would then simply sit at a terminal, dial the computer, and the book and page he wished to read would appear on a screen before him. Hence libraries would cease to be repositories of books, and would instead become buildings housing vast banks of terminals. His own doctoral thesis in library science had been devoted to this very theme; and since appointment at Surleighwick, Dr Pratt had endeavoured so far as possible to remove books into store, and replace them by computer terminals.'

Pratt's ambition is to make Surleighwick 'the first university library in the country with no actual books of its own. What a saving that would be in university staff!' To achieve this aim books which had not been borrowed for more than twenty-five years were removed from the shelves and into storage.

But that was years ago. Since then the University of Sydney's Fisher library has targeted and removed books allegedly not borrowed in the last five years. The aim was to remove 500,000 books and journals from open shelf access. In a similar move, the University of New South Wales required librarians to remove 50,000 volumes a year.

Books may not have been borrowed for a number of reasons. They may well have been consulted in the library. That is the point of having them on open access. Courses on which they might have featured may have been badly taught; hopefully in the future there would better teaching and they would required again. When after the purge I went into Fisher Library looking for the works of two major nineteenth-century novelists, Disraeli and Thackeray, I found that in each case the collected edition of their works had been relegated to the deposit library, and only odd individual volumes of two or three of their novels were on the shelves. There were twenty copies of *Dracula.* There were shelves of Agatha Christie and Ruth Rendell. Presumably the teaching of nineteenth-century English literature had been going on for the last five years, or longer, without any mention of those major writers in English, a worrying enough thought. But had the librarians let these collected editions remain, perhaps the occasional curious undergraduate or post-graduate or even an academic might have found occasion to open a volume and maybe even borrow it.

This is an international practice now. Teresa Burns, an academic correspondent of mine in the USA, recently told me how she had been making a point of systematically borrowing books in her subject that had not been borrowed in the previous five years, just to ensure they remained in the library. However, she confessed, she now regretted doing this, since books culled from the library had routinely been put on a table with the sign 'free books', from which she was able to pick up some rare and amazing and invaluable titles. She could now have been the private owner of the really rare ones had she not been impelled by a public-spirited scholar's concern for the preservation and sharing of knowledge to borrow unborrowed books to ensure they remained in the library.

Allegedly, books and journals removed from the shelves are placed into a deposit store somewhere or other. Many academics are sceptical of the truth of this claim. They remember the great scandal at the University of Western Sydney when skip-loads of books deemed duplicates, silver-fish infested, and surplus to requirements, were thrown out and used for landfill. The claim by the University of Sydney librarian that books and journals removed from shelves would go into deposit is untrue. Recently I went to consult the journal *Notes and Queries*, that weird and wonderful publication in which scholars and antiquaries and obsessives share their findings. I published a dozen or so notes there over the years, 'Samuel Butler at

Barbourne', 'Two Missing Shakespeare Documents', 'The Epitaph to Gray's Elegy: Two Early Printings and a Parody', the sort of thing that disturbs the theorists.

Notes and Queries had been established in 1849. Not many institutions have a complete run – most universities were established years after it began publication. Fisher had a rare, complete set of the journal, and Laurie Hergenhan called me from Brisbane once to check an item in it that Marcus Clarke had written. Browsing through the journal I found Clarke had written a dozen pieces in the 1870s. I wanted to browse through it again.

But that complete run of *Notes and Queries* is no longer in the catalogue. It is not on the shelves or in deposit. If you are a member of the library you can access *Notes and Queries* electronically. But what happened to the complete run of bound volumes? It was very valuable – even for its bindings to furnish a room. Was it thrown out into a skip? Or will it turn up in some rare bookseller's catalogue? How man other books and journals have been disposed of without trace? Who would tell the truth? Just delete an item from the catalogue, and who will ever know that it had ever been there? Such speculations are the stuff that fuels the plot of *The Surleighwick Effect.*

Further examination of the Fisher catalogue indicates that a host of journals including *Essays in Criticism, Review of English Studies, Modern Language Review* and *Prose Studies* are now only available electronically, and that the hard copies have not been put in deposit, but have disappeared without trace. Why? Wouldn't it have been sensible to preserve these resources, in case of some internet meltdown or some massive cyber attack? *Milton Quarterly* is, the catalogue announces, in 'off-site storage not retrievable' – whatever that means. Mysteriously *JEGP* and *PMLA* are still available on the open shelves of the stacks, and also available electronically. Does the discrepancy reflect the fact that these latter two journals cover modern languages and literature as well as English; were the French and German academics concerned to retain journals relating to their discipline, unlike their colleagues in English?

For a while Australia lagged behind in this purge of books. In the 1990s I donated my own library to the University of Western Sydney under the cultural donations scheme. Philanthropy with a tax advantage. UWS was vigorously acquiring the libraries of former academics. Then the process stopped. The library no longer had the staff to catalogue donations. Not longer afterwards the scandal of the books being dumped for landfill hit the press.

One of my correspondents told me that at one university 'I've heard they lock the skips where they dump the books ready to take to landfill in case the archivists try to retrieve some of the rarer items.' He added: 'I once saw a librarian at a local Council library randomly knocking books from the shelves to the floor of the

library. I asked what she was doing. She replied: "De-accessioning". When she saw the look of horror on my face she explained that she been to a course and that "Turnover" was now considered "really important" in libraries and that it wasn't good to have too many older books on the shelves (no matter how good their condition) because new books encouraged reading.'

The cultural donations scheme was a splendid way to assist small and new libraries build up their holdings. But by the turn of the century libraries increasingly claimed that lack of staff to process donations prevented them from receiving any more. This was not a uniquely Australian issue. The National Library of Jerusalem had over the years received 650,000 books it had not processed. It decided to give 30,000 of them away to the public. Nir Hasson reported in *Haaretz,* (21 July, 2011) that 'among the dozens of items that mistakenly made their way into private hands were a Bulgarian translation of Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye the Milkman* and a German-language first edition of Charles Darwin's *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*... A scholar in the humanities - one of the hundreds of people who attended the giveaway - scooped up dozens of books in the library's core areas, about half of which were not in the National Library or any other library in Israel. They included the Bulgarian *Tevye*, published in 1949 by the Bulgarian Communist Party; a book on World War II and the Holocaust in Estonia; and a science book by Dr. Otto Warburg, a former president of the World Zionist Organization, signed by Yeshayahu Leibowitz.'

Not only public and university libraries have been subject to these purges. Back in the 1970s I wrote a few book reviews for the *Sydney Morning Herald,* but in those days review copies had to be returned so they could be put into the *Herald* library. Payment then, as now, was meagre and, without the free book, reviewing hardly seemed worth it so I stopped reviewing for the *Herald*. Now that library has been purged. A former journalist, Suzy Baldwin, told me 'The *SMH* library was forced to "deaccession" when I was there. They needed half the library space to put in more accountants. Fortunately, those who were interested were allowed to go through the books before they were sent off to charity so I rescued some, including several volumes of Byron's letters and Bernard Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific*.'

We need to be deeply suspicious of the claims of lack of space. This is all too often the excuse for the ideological refusal of gifts and the purging of existing holdings. Researching William Lane and Henry Lawson in the 1980s, I needed to look at a number of articles about them in the Australian *Communist Review*. It was in the catalogue but not on the shelves. I discovered it had been stored in deposit. Was this to protect it from rabid reactionaries whom might have removed and destroyed it? Such destruction was not unknown. The issue of *Artforum* (June 1974) with Eva Cockroft's article 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War' on how the CIA funded exhibitions of Abstract Expressionist Art was missing from Fisher library's bound

volume. Was that to prevent people from reading the article? A retired academic told me: 'As a historian of the Cold War and its many ramifications, I had been reading and collecting issues of the *Australasian Spartacist* for many years. While I did not subscribe to its avowed Marxist/Trotskyist philosophy, I had always found its content well-informed, interesting and refreshing, and offering some counter-balance to all the conservative US-oriented propaganda masquerading as serious academic research in so many other publications.

'On my impending retirement, I approached our head librarian, a man of some long standing in his profession, and told him about my substantial collection. I offered to donate it to the university library and assured him that it was complete and in excellent condition. I had assumed it would be a welcome addition and would eventually provide worthwhile primary- and secondary-source material for future researchers. To my dismay and astonishment, he glowered at me and admonished me with some snide comment along the lines of "That rubbish? Do you actually read that stuff? What would the university want with that?... Just throw it in the rubbish bin." He then walked off without even a thank-you-for-the-offer.'

Another librarian, Craig Brittain, alerted me to other dangers. He wrote: 'Years ago, at the request of Lyndall Ryan (at the time the professor of Women's Studies at Flinders) I was asked to establish the Eros Foundation Archive, a collection on, by and about the Australian and international sex industry. Its access is highly restricted and it is housed in Special Collections, but there have always been grumblings right from the beginning by certain staff members and academics about its very existence. Why have we got it at all? I can easily imagine a situation in which material of this nature might be purged.... The next University Librarian or vice-chancellor (or a conservative government, Labor, Liberal or Green) could easily decide that we shouldn't have such filth. That the research interest of the university, which had justified the collection in the first place, had changed, and we should use the space for more worthy material.

'It could be decided to rid the Eros Archive of the pornography on the grounds that it's of limited academic value; or at least the non-Australian material, on the grounds that it's not our responsibility to preserve the products of other countries, even though the original brief from Women's Studies and Sociology was to collect as widely as possible. There is plenty of material in the archive that is unique to collection (that wouldn't be held by ANY other libraries, in Australia, or anywhere else) - magazines & newsletters from the 70s, 80s and 90s (Australian & international) and X-rated videos from Australia, the USA, UK & Europe.

'Originally my job was to collect information about all aspects of the sex industry (& related industries, and health and social issues) - (a) about the Australian industry & and how it related to the international industry, (b) printed and video materials produced by the Australian sex industry, (c) overseas products available in

Australia. This original brief could easily be "forgotten" or altered to suit changed attitudes to this sort of material. The current University Librarian and Special Collections librarian continue to support it, but it always bothers me when a library has the *only* copy anything, especially of material as sensitive as this. The only way to protect it would be to digitize it and to distribute the digitized collection to other interested libraries. This is unlikely to happen, but until it does it's always under threat.'

Political, religious and moral judgments on the worth of a book are irrelevant to library holdings. A collection of books deemed worthless by a literary scholar might be invaluable to a sociologist or psychologist or political historian. A lively young novelist suggested to me that the removal of the works of a certain best-selling, high flying mediocrity from a library's holdings would be a good thing. But it wouldn't, I assured him. No, libraries should be value free and preserve everything, even the appalling. Later ages will then see the debased state of our literary culture when they look back at the holdings. And amongst it all some good things might also be preserved. Crucial historical evidence.

Alison Broinowski, reviewing my novel *Asian Dawn*, wrote: 'The name Kolkata dates the story after 2001, but from Plant's reluctant use of the internet you'd hardly know it. Having no laptop, Plant wonders whether to make a list in his head or commit it to paper which might be found. Ghosh and Ackerman seem not to have computers and don't use email. None of them has a mobile phone. Plant hunts for monographs in the library and bookshop, not in the university's web catalogue, and when trying to find out Starr's background he doesn't think of Google or Facebook. Why ever not?'

The answer is that Plant, as a private-eye whose investigations often seem to touch on the political, tries to reduce the amount of surveillance on his activities. So he does not carry a mobile phone since calls and contacts can be hacked into by law enforcement, security services, global media, other private detectives, and any young geek, and his whereabouts can be triangulated. For a similar reason he does not use the internet, since searches are all monitored and accessible to too many agencies, governmental, security, commercial and private. That is why when he needed information on a dodgy publisher, his offsider Fullalove advises:

'First thing we go to the university, check out your friend Starr in the library. We go to the reference section. Open shelves. We don't have to ask a librarian. We don't have to borrow anything. No record, no personal contact. Forget the web. Forget electronics. That's all monitored. We just take a pen and paper, whiz in, whiz out, then you buy me breakfast. And no one need ever known we've been there.' 'And what do we look up?' 'Whatever's there. We start with the Marquis *Who's Who in the World*.'

Well, that was the idea. But in the time between my correcting the proofs and publication, Fullalove's strategy had indeed become out of date. When I next went into Fisher Library to look up *Who's Who* I

discovered that it was no longer there. The whole reference section with its directories of *Who's Who, Who's Who in the World, Contemporary Writers, Contemporary Novelists* and such like had gone. Purged.

But worse than that is the incredible fact that *Who's Who* was no longer in the library at all. It was not in deposit. The back volumes stretching back a century were not in deposit. The British *Who's Who* is the standard reference source for details about current figures deemed important in the UK. It is the original and basic reference work of its kind. Directories like *Who's Who* should never be thrown out; they may be superseded each year for current information, but previous volumes provide a unique and invaluable record of who was who, and whose entry has been removed, and the year someone gained entry to its pages, and the changes they may have made to the information they chose to reveal. And having thrown *Who's Who* out, the largest library in the southern hemisphere, as it proudly calls itself, did not bother to organize an electronic subscription to the directory.

The New York Public Library has similarly been subject to culling and off-site depositing. Stephen Eide wrote in *City Journal* (Autumn 2013): 'Under the new plan, more than 1 million fewer books will be available on-site, and 3 million fewer books than the library *could* keep on-site. Researchers will have to request materials at least a day in advance, making research more inconvenient. Often, while studying a source on the premises, researchers discover through a footnote that still another source is needed. They will put in a request for that additional source, just as always - only now, they'll often have to wait a day to get it. The discovery process will no longer flow as naturally. To non-researchers, this may seem a petty matter, but ready access to the collection - not just the collection's magnificence - is what has helped make the New York Public Library indispensable.'

Accessing library records for political intelligence operations is a basic practice. I remember a particularly distasteful hack who used to hang around on the fringes of the literary and political worlds telling me some years back that he was researching one of those Cold War left-wingers routinely denounced in the media. He had gone to the chap's Oxford college and looked up his library borrowings in the 1930s. I am still not sure whether this was a careless revelation of tradecraft, or an attempt to freak me out. Freak me out it certainly did. Who knows what books youthful curiosity had led me to consult? Who knows what interpretation might be put on such borrowings in some witch-hunt or spookery?

Now, of course, that is a matter of routine. The shift to electronic library searches makes the intelligence agencies' tasks simple. Everything recorded, everything accessible by NSA or GCHQ. You don't need to log into Wikileaks to end up automatically on a watch list. In the course of writing *Wild Bleak Bohemia*, I turned up an 1860s article about Marcus Clarke in a series called 'Sketches in Pigskin.' Not knowing the significance

of pigskin in this context, I did an internet search. Pigskin was used for horse saddles and I clicked on one item the search engine found for me, which took me to an anguished query by a young Muslim who had bought a horse saddle, discovered it was made of pigskin, and wondered whether the use of an unclean animal in this context was forbidden. Yes, there I was, on a fundamentalist Islamic website. And the bells may well have been ringing.

Such considerations are relevant to the issue of open access, of what books should be on the shelves. The result of shifting books from open shelves into deposit means that you can no longer consult a lot of things in the library without any record of your search being made. Every request for a book from deposit, like every borrowing, and every internet search, is recorded. Replacing open shelf hard copies with digitized versions to be accessed by the internet, again ensures that every consultation is recorded. If, that is, you can access them. Books and journals which previously anyone could consult are being replaced by e-versions, restricted to the university's staff and students. Free, democratic, open access to information is now being reduced to a user-pays model. If you are a member of a wealthy, elite institution, you may have access to the world's learning. Otherwise, forget it.

Visiting Braunschweig one time, my academic host told me that the coffee merchants of that town were strong supporters of Hitler's National Socialist party. The Nazis were great book burners. Now we no longer burn books, but we get rid of them from libraries so we can install coffee lounges in their place. Same policy, different strategies. Again, this is a worldwide trend. Peter Jones, a retired professor of Classics, wrote in in *The Spectator* (29 October, 2011) about the library of the University of Newcastle-on-Tyne: 'It was over Christmas 2007 that the culture began to change, and the library to go the way of the rest of the university. Management "rebranded" it, and in January 2008 one walked in to find something called "YourSpace", which offered students places where they could (i) work in comfort, (ii) work with friends, or (iii) chat.

'I was not aware that the purpose of a university library was to act as a social networking area, but this move fitted into a wider trend. Government pressure to take more and more students was relentless. Staff-student ratios plummeted. It was now becoming impossible to give the weaker students the help they needed to bring them up to scratch. It was more a case of the university adapting its standards to theirs. The student, not the university, was now the master. Academic staff, naturally, had no say in the matter: the administration made it quite clear what was required. So students want the library (of all places) to be a social space? It shall be done.

'A few years later, TV screens sprang up throughout the building. They informed us of the weather, how to contact victim support, where we could get help if we were in financial difficulties, that all the computers were

working and we must carry our smartcard at all times — all quite irrelevant to the work of a library. Then management put up a notice informing users that the library strove constantly to "deliver excellent customer service", "embrace teamwork", "celebrate success and share praise" (I am not joking). When management tries to ingratiate itself, you know you are in trouble. Occasionally I asked staff and porters what praise they had shared that day. They fell about laughing.'

The same policy has spread through public libraries throughout Australia. My own local library has a room, the doors always wide open, devoted to infants' story telling and sing-alongs and other loud activities, even though there is a community centre next door that could more properly be used for such things, and allow some peace and quiet for the students swatting up for the HSC and the pensioners browsing through books and newspapers. But at least these libraries still exist. In Britain, public libraries are increasingly being closed, as the local councils claim they no longer have the funds to maintain them and at the same time pay council CEOs vast salaries.

There are many ways and excuses to destroy libraries. Whereas the last years of the nineteenth-century saw a concerted move to educate people, provide free schooling and free libraries and universities of quality and distinction, the twenty-first century seems to be running a policy of dumbing down and surveillance. Yes, the internet allows easy access to information. But it has not replaced books. It is an invaluable research tool. So are traditional books and libraries. An intelligent solution would be to maintain both systems. But to depend increasingly and solely on the internet is not a good solution, except for the shareholders in IT companies. A correspondent pointed out to me 'One extra thing I've found that is very problematic is the digitization of newspapers. They always only chose to digitize a single issue of each day's paper. The problem with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, for example, is that sometimes something really controversial hits the first edition but is removed pretty smartly by the lawyers and vanishes from subsequent editions of the paper. Future generations will never know that this occurred and there thus will probably be occasions when extremely significant events become hidden from history because only one edition of a newspaper was digitized.'

This is a problem with the splendid Trove initiative by which Australian newspapers have been digitized. Only one edition of the paper has been digitized. And this is the problem with a reliance on digital records alone. In addition to which, with e-books it is so easy to change the text, and leave no trace of the change behind. The Orwellian vision of reprinting entire editions of a work and withdrawing and destroying the previous edition was always cumbersome and expensive; doctoring digitized material is easy.

Sydney Review of Books, March 2014.

No Studies, Please; We're British

It was a colleague of mine in the English department at the University of Birmingham, Neville Davis, who first raised my anxiety about 'studies'. Whenever the word studies is attached to a discipline, he remarked, it always marks the degradation of the original. Drama becomes Drama Studies, French becomes French Studies (with no language compulsion), English becomes English Studies.When a title had to be found for my chair at the university of Sydney and a fellow professor suggested English Studies, I was deeply, and I suspect properly, suspicious.

But then whatever might have been meant by English Studies was not at all what is meant by British Studies. The apparent interchangeability of English and British does not apply in this context. English has always been a subject of its own, indeed an empire of its own, which no doubt explains its suspicions of British Studies. English (the subject) was always the language of English and the literature written in that language. The national provenance of the literature was not perceived as explicitly significant: so English was the banner under which American literature was taught, and later Commonwealth Literature, and later again the New Literatures in English. English as the subject's title is still redolent of those days when the language was the only qualifier of Literature, or Writing, not the nationality. The days when I grew up wanting to be a writer, not an English writer or a Worcestershire writer or an expatriate writer or anything but a writer. But those days seem to have gone. I remember David Lodge asking me in puzzlement not so long ago, 'What are you? Are you an English writer or an Australian writer?' I found I couldn't clearly answer him. As far as I was concerned I was just a writer, I felt no need to attach a national label. But the world, or certain forces in the world, have felt the need to attach national labels. It is one of the huge paradoxes of the contemporary moment that in an economic phase of globalization of markets and investments, in a period of the domination of the transnationals, themes of nationality and nationalism have revived so stridently.

Now in one aspect, the injection of the idea of British studies into the teaching of English literature can be a very salutary thing. The way in which English (the subject) transcended mere nationality was part of the way in which it transcended pretty well everything and attempted to inculcate those elusive 'purely literary values.' English has always been bedevilled by a refusal to contextualise itself, in terms of nationality, history, politics, class, economics, psychology or indeed anything else. English has been characterized at many institutions, certainly at the University of Sydney, by a series of negations. The old style professorial pronouncements went along the lines of, 'We are teaching English, not politics, not history, not psychology, not biography, not religion.' It didn't leave you with much after all the exclusions. Issues that might have made clear the issues of

the literature were taboo. This was the whole project of the old 'New Criticism' and this has continued to be the project of the larger part of the new 'theory.'

So I for one would welcome the possibility of British Studies influencing the study of English literature in the direction of understanding the Britishness of English literature, the whole complex history and culture embedded in the writing. It would be, of course, a huge task. And it would be rather more than the old cliché of pointing out to Australian students that midsummer in Britain is in June, not December, that the seasons are the other way round, and other such things. It would be rather more than filling in a catalogue of flora and fauna, too. After reading Rachel Carson's *The Silent Spring* about the destructive effects of DDT, Aldous Huxley remarked that we were losing half the subject matter of English poetry. It was not a trivial observation and I don't want to trivialise Huxley's response. But it does continually need to be stressed that there is more to English literature than catalogues of flowers and the memorialisation of that English paradise. Indeed you have only to turn to the play in which the English paradise is celebrated, Shakespeare's *Richard II*, to see that when John O'Gaunt refers to Britain as 'This other Eden, demi-paradise' he is celebrating something which was under attack, that the paradise was deeply divided amongst competing political and social forces; and you have only to explore a little of the context of Shakespeare's own time to see that the supposedly historical play *Richard II* was dealing with contemporary political divisions, and that after it was performed at request on the eve of Essex's unsuccessful rebellion, Shakespeare and his company tactfully and rapidly left town for a while. As Queen Elizabeth put it, 'Know that I am Richard.'

One of the many failings of the Keating administration in Australia was its introduction of racial politics to cover up its betrayal of its socialist constituency. So to be British in Australia was something of a liability. If you were British you had sent young Australians to their death in Gallipoli, you had starved the Irish in the potato famine, you had surrendered Singapore to the Japanese, and you wanted to retain a monarchy. To be blamed for the atrocities of the British ruling class in Australia is something many of us find very galling. Indeed, it was to get away from that very ruling class that many of us came to Australia.

What a British studies programme could valuably do in Australia is show how divided a society Britain is and always has been. The United Kingdom is a phrase that has always seemed to me a misnomer. Benjamin D'Israeli over a century ago popularised the concept of the two nations, but I think he was underestimating. During the seventeenth-century the concept of the Norman Yoke encapsulated how oppositional groups felt about British politics - that the ruling party were not really British but occupying Normans. A.E. Housman's poem 'The Welsh Marches' encapsulates the earlier conflict between the Anglo-Saxon and Celt:

The flag of morn in conqueror's state
Enters at the English gate:
The vanquished eve, as night prevails
Bleeds upon the road to Wales.

And the poem encapsulates, moreover, the way the conflict continues within the single individual.

In my heart it has not died,
The war that sleeps on Severn side;
They cease not fighting, east and west,
On the marches of my breast.

But these ethnic stereotypings within Britain are in large part metaphoric for divisions based on region, on class, on ideology.

There have always been strong oppositional voices in Britain. After all, the English Revolution was the great model for the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution, even if Mrs Thatcher, commenting on the French bicentennial celebrations of 1789, said rather oddly that Britain had never had nor needed a revolution. Wrong on both counts, surely. To go back to England's treatment of Ireland, governmental policy has never commanded total support. There was vocal opposition within Britain to Cromwell's campaign in Ireland. As a Leveller pamphlet put it: 'For consider, as things now stand, to what end you should hazard your lives against the Irish: have you not been fighting these seven years in England for rights and liberties that you are yet deluded of? and that too, when as none can hinder you of them but your own officers, under whom you have fought? and will you go on still to kill, slay and murder men, to make them as absolute lords and masters over Ireland as you have made them over England?' There was vocal opposition to the military strategies and policies of the first world war. Indeed there was vocal opposition to everything. 'A headstrong, moody, murmuring race,' Dryden called his fellow British in *Absalom and Achitophel* (I. 450).

Even within English (the subject) good work has been done in exploring this area. John Lucas's splendid *England and Englishness* (Hogarth Press, 1990) looks at just these complexities in the idea of nationhood in English poetry. For all the nationalistic implications of a programme like British Studies, it is a programme that can undo simplistic nationalistic sloganizing; it can demonstrate the oppositional forces and critical forces and dissident forces within the national; indeed, it can demonstrate that the national is only the policy of a

particular group that has seized power at a particular time; and that the nation contains a much greater richness and diversity and decency than that. And it can also indicate the great positive achievements of these forces of dissent and opposition. It might still not be too late to recall that trades unions, free education, a national health service and the welfare state were pioneered in Britain - even if these are all rapidly becoming concepts fading from contemporary reality and found only in the historical records. And if this can be done, then 'British studies' will have represented not that degradation of academic study I mentioned to begin with, but instead have contributed a significant enhancement of scholarship, education and understanding.

Britain in Europe: Prospects for Change, ed. John Milfull, Ashgate, 1999.

Literary Links: Australia & Britain

Some years ago I was asked to introduce an exhibition of British and Australian literary links devised by the British Council and National Library of Australia at the New South Wales Writers' Centre.

We all remember the words of the English writer, Hilaire Belloc - not an especially English name, but there we are - suggesting, 'Go out and govern New South Wales.' Oddly enough one of the governors of New South Wales became a major figure in literary history - Lord Beauchamp. It was Lord Beauchamp who arranged for Henry Lawson to visit England in the early twentieth century. Later, Beauchamp became the model for Lord Brideshead in Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited* - Lord Brideshead who had to leave England and live in Italy to avoid the scandal of his homosexuality. There's a story told of a dinner party presided over by Beauchamp before he left England. It was not commemorated in the exhibition, but it is well authenticated. The butler came in, bent his ear towards Beauchamp, who reportedly whispered to him, in French, *'Je t'adore'*, I adore you.

'Did you hear that?' one of the guests said to the person next to him.

'No no,' said the very British second guest, 'he just said, "Shut the door".'

To stress British-Australian literary links at the present moment is perhaps to be unfashionable or even politically incorrect in these all but republican days. And in our new Asian oriented Australia, it is certainly true that we are geographically close and economically increasingly connected to Asia. But there are other links, it is not impossible to hope, besides the economic and the geographical. It is salutary to be reminded of those English writers who wrote so powerfully about Australia - like Marcus Clarke and Henry Kingsley who lived here, and Anthony Trollope and D.H. Lawrence who visited. And of those Australian writers who lived much of their life in England, like Christina Stead and Jack Lindsay and Patrick White.

In the current climate there was a certain cultural provocativeness about the exhibition. Multiculturalism had been such an important development in the previous decade. The recognition of the diverse contribution to Australian life of so many different ethnic and national groups was certainly belated, and certainly entirely proper. But as with all good and worthwhile things, as indeed with the very notion of political correctness, there is also a negative side that can be, and often is, exploited. It sometimes seems to me that in the negative aspect of multiculturalism there is an agenda to sever the two hundred year old cultural connexion of Britain and Australia, so that Australia will drift all the more easily into the ambiguous embrace of the United States. Some, of course, may feel that this has already happened.

The other belated recognition of Australia's cultural heritage has been that of the role of the aboriginal peoples. When I first came to Australia, the aboriginal people were not even on the census. I mentioned this extraordinary if not indeed appalling fact in my introduction to the *Oxford Book of Australian Short Stories*, but the Australian branch of that distinguished English university press cut the sentence out.

An entirely sensible and proper recognition of aboriginal culture, of multiculturalism and of Asia does not necessitate a denial of the British-Australian connexion. It is, after all, the prime connection in literary matters, since it is the English language in which Australian literature has been predominantly written, the language that was forged from a mixing of the languages of the Germanic and the Norman French invaders of the British Isles, after they had displaced the previous occupants. The English language is the product of conquest and genocide. But out of that language a marvellous literature has emerged, and it would be absurd and indeed self-destructive for Australia to deny its participation in it.

This literary links exhibition demonstrates the strength of Australia's part in this now international phenomenon. Economic and military alliances involve dominance and hierarchy. But a participation in a shared linguistic and literary culture need not require that. The English language, as Australian literature and English literature show, readily transmits an oppositional discourse.

I remember some twenty years ago going to the launch of Tom Shapcott's anthology of American and Australian poetry published to celebrate the American bicentenary. The American poet Robert Creeley was participating in a seminar later that day, and Tom Shapcott asked him if he would launch the book. Creeley looked through a copy, discovered he wasn't in it, and firmly, and I won't say politely, refused.

Well, not everybody gets to be in everything. There are many of us with literary links to Britain and Australia who are not represented here. We were of the sort of people who, as the ballad puts it, left our country for our country's good, rather than going out to govern New South Wales, so our absence was no great surprise. What the French, if I many mention them in these nuclear last days, might well call a significant absence. We did think of using one of our showcases and labelling it 'Missing Links' to exhibit some of the writers not mentioned, but to do that properly would have required far more space than we have. But that apart, at least this exhibition gives a sampling of Australian-British interchange. Maybe it should have been called the tip of the iceberg. But then someone might have thought we were thinking of the Australia Council as the Titanic. Ladies and gentlemen, let us welcome this exhibition to our walls.

Newswrite, 43 (1995).

Multicultural Writing

Some time ago the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts sent the NSW Writers' Centre details about project funding for writers of non-English speaking backgrounds. The idea was that we would publicize the details through our newsletter, through the Litlinks association of writers' centres, and through multicultural writing groups. It was then that we discovered no listing existed for these multicultural groups. Neither the Ministry for the Arts, the Australia Council, the Australian Society of Authors nor the Writers' Centre - or any other Writers' Centre - had the information.

And so the Centre began its project of compiling the first *Directory of Multicultural Writing Groups.* With the help of the Ethnic Affairs Commission, the NSW Ministry for the Arts, and Litlinks we were able to finance the project. Marisa Cano enthusiastically and most effectively undertook the research. And the resultant directory listing some forty groups was launched at Sydney Writers' Week in May.

We are very pleased with this unique publication, which has been welcomed by a whole range of cultural and literary organizations. As the first of its kind it will inevitably, despite the strenuous researches of its editor, have omissions. We should be glad to know of them, and incorporate them into our computerized data bank. For all the talk and writing about multiculturalism, some positive, some negative, much of the basic work in the area has still to be done, and this *Directory* is a major contribution to providing basic information. As Leon Cantrell, the Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Western Sydney remarked in his inaugural address, the universities have taken little cognizance of the rich multiculturalism of Australian society. There are still many languages spoken and written in Australia that are not represented in academic curricula. There are still rich literary cultures whose works find no place in the humanities syllabuses in tertiary education. Even fewer are represented in the secondary school system. Moreover the current downgrading of traditional modern European and Asian language departments into language service courses in many of our universities is further depleting this cultural heritage.

But multiculturalism as a policy also contains ambiguities that we need to recognize. The category of migrant writing, or multicultural writing, which has been widely used in Australia since the 1980s, is the product of social and cultural theorists, not of writers. None of the writers I know, myself included, especially wants to be called a migrant writer or an ethnic writer. That sort of labelling can all too readily marginalise you. It implies that there is mainstream writing and then there is also, in a subsidiary way, migrant and ethnic writing along with various other fractions and groups. The multicultural and postcolonial theorists, of course, all stress that there is no single, central cultural authority, everything is 'difference'. But that is a dubious

academic, theoretical pluralism. In practice, in the political and cultural spheres, there are the accepted writers, and then there are the other categories, which look good in United Nations reports and politicians' electoral campaigns, but do no good for the writers categorised in those subsections.

Migrant writing and ethnic writing, the whole multicultural agenda, have in their negative aspect been devised as categories to replace old style political and class groupings. They divide writing, and people, into separatist, nationalist categories in order to break down traditional trades' union alliances in the work place and political alliances in the cultural sphere. So although multiculturalism has offered some gains in the recognition of the existence of different cultural traditions, different ethnicities and national identities, it has also served traditional divide and rule policies. Breaking the literary world into fragments only serves to reduce its significance; it leaves public commentary in the hands of the hired lobbyists and professional public relations people.

That is the negative side, of which we need to be aware. But on the positive side, the recognition of multicultural writing has markedly advanced our awareness of the rich cultural activity of contemporary Australia. Marisa Cano's *Directory* provides a fascinating and informative way of accessing some of this richness.

Newswrite, 83 (June 1999).

Literary Cities: Sydney and Melbourne

When you think of Sydney you think of the harbour. Its history was that of a port city, and Joseph Conrad, Jack London, Robert Louis Stevenson and D.H. Lawrence all sailed in there at various times. So did Hardy's Arabella and Dickens' Magwitch. Miles Franklin, who launched into fame with *My Brilliant Career* (1901) describes the harbour in *My Career Goes Bung* (1946): 'The Harbour was divine in the full day sun, brilliant blue but with a breath of haze like a veil, and little grey cow tracks all across it like sashes on the tides. The small waves whispered of the tides on the rocks covered with oyster shells and draped in seaweed with a grand sedgy odour. The gulls rocked about like paper boats at play.'

When you sail into Sydney harbour the first settlement on the South Head is Watson's bay. It was here in Pacific Street that Christina Stead grew up, and where she set her novels *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* and *For Love Alone*. On the North side you can see the imposing seminary at Manly, St Patrick's College, where Thomas Keneally trained for the priesthood in the 1950s and where he set his first novel, the murder mystery *The Place at Witton*. and *Three Cheers for the Paraclete* (1968). The great poet of the harbour was Kenneth Slessor; his 'Five Bells' (1939) laments the death of a cartoonist, Joe Lynch, who fell overboard from a ferry. With Captain Dobbin he portrays a retired sea-captain.

Now sails the street in a brick villa, 'Laburnum Villa'
In whose blank windows the harbour hangs
Like a fog against the glass,
Golden and smoky, or stoned with a white glitter,
And boats go by, suspended in the pane,
Blue Funnel, Red Funnel, Messageries Maritimes,
Lugged down the port like sea-beasts taken alive
That scrape their bellies on sharp sands
Of which particulars Captain Dobbin keeps
A ledger sticky with ink,
Entries of time and weather, state of the moon,
Nature of cargo and captain's name,
For some mysterious and awful purpose,
Never divulged.

The first major literary moment was in the 1880s and 1890s, when a wave of radical and republican energy swept the city. *The Bulletin* magazine was founded then by J.F. Archibald - who also endowed a major portrait prize, and had a vision of Sydney as a city of fountains. The splendid Archibald Fountain still stands in Hyde Park in the centre of the city. *The Bulletin* had its first office at 107 Castlereagh Street, for the first six months of 1880, moved to 13 Bridge Street for a year, and then to 24 Pitt Street. It then settled at 214 George Street until 1931, and at 252 George Street until 1964. It ended its days at 54 Park Street in the Australian Consolidated Press building. The publishing house of Angus & Robertson was established around the same time. You are never far from the harbour in Sydney. Both *The Bulletin* and Angus & Robertson had their offices close enough to Circular Quay, Darling Harbour or the docks of Woolloomooloo, for the inner city and waterfront bars to become a focus of literary bohemian activity.

The literary bars were numerous and endlessly changing. Through the ’20s and ’30s there was Pellegrini’s wine bar in a basement at 85 Elizabeth Street, Betsy Matthais’ Cafe La Bohème in Wilmot Street, Theo’s Club near Central Railway at 34 Campbell Street. Andrew’s Continental Cafe, a Greek restaurant, at 192 Castlereagh Street, Mockbell’s Cafe behind *The Bulletin* at 252 George Street, and Pakie’s Club in Elizabeth Street were centres from the ’30s through the ’50s Then there was Lorenzini’s wine bar in King Street and later in William Street, and Vadim’s in King’s Cross. None of these survives; but the Marble Bar, which was decorated with Norman Lindsay artwork, is preserved intact inside the Hilton Hotel in George Street.

Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson were the writers especially associated with *The Bulletin*. Both of them celebrated the bush, the outback, the country, Paterson with his poem ‘The Man From Snowy River,’ Lawson with such classic stories as ‘The Drover’s Wife’ and ‘The Union Buries Its Dead.’ But both of them led for preference an urban life in Sydney. Lawson’s early poem ‘Faces in the Street’ commemorates the poverty of the inner-city suburb Surry Hills:

They lie, the men who tell us in a loud decisive tone
That want is here a stranger, and that misery’s unknown;
For where the nearest suburb and the city proper meet
My window-sill is level with the faces in the street -
Drifting past, drifting past
To the beat of weary feet -
While I sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street.

In his last years, impoverished, deaf, alcoholic, Lawson used to beg for the price of a drink down at the quay.

Sydney's bohemian years are well recorded by the Lindsays. Norman Lindsay, artist, cartoonist and novelist, wrote the classic memoir of the 1890s *Bohemians of the Bulletin* (1965) and his son Jack Lindsay took the story on another thirty years with *The Roaring Twenties* (l960). Norman himself withdrew to Springwood in the Blue Mountains, 50 miles inland, where he painted fleshy nudes, laid out the grounds of his house with sculptures, and held court. The Blue Mountains were also a retreat for Eleanor Dark, who wrote the classic historical trilogy of Australian settlement, *The Timeless Land.* Springwood is now a museum devoted to Lindsay's work, and Dark's home Varuna is a Writers' Centre.

Sydney's bohemian world was still thriving in the 1960s and 70s, when a new wave of creative energy developed, after the dull, puritanical Menzies years. Australia has always been a heavily urbanized society, but the myth was that it was a rural society, and for decades this had been the literary myth too. In the late sixties a new wave of writers began to record the urban life around them, to challenge the official, stuffy life style with a more accurate, or at least more exciting, portrayal of inner city living. Bohemianism had been reinforced by a post world war II movement, libertarianism, which served to depoliticize Sydney in comparison with Melbourne, but encouraged, under the guise of anarchist philosophy, a hedonistic life style and 'critical drinking.'

Publishing was at a low ebb, so writers found outlets in readings. The literary journals had lost their way so new ones sprung up - *New Poetry* edited by Robert Adamson, *Tabloid Story* edited by Frank Moorhouse, Michael Wilding, Carmel Kelly and Brian Kiernan. The George Hotel at Darling Harbour and The Newcastle Hotel at 205 George Street near the Quay became a nightly venue for poets, novelists, journalists and filmmakers. The youthful Germaine Greer, Clive James, Robert Hughes, could all be found here.

Kings Cross was the night-life centre in the post war years. For a while it was the chosen spot for writers and painters to live; then they moved to the neighbouring Paddington, and as Paddington became gentrified they moved to Balmain, an old waterfront suburb further up the harbour from the Bridge. Frank Moorhouse's *The Americans Baby* (1974) and *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, and Michael Wilding's *Living Together* (1974) and *The Short Story Embassy* (1975) mythologised these inner city suburbs. Melbourne writers began to migrate northwards - David Williamson and Peter Carey to Balmain, Barry Oakley to Paddington. It is a post-modern historical Balmain (and its adjoining Birchgrove) that Peter Carey creates for the early parts of his Booker prize -winning novel *Oscar and Lucinda*, before Oscar sets out on his trek north. David

Williamson's plays *Emerald City* and *Top Silk* captured the brash, dynamic Sydney of the 1980s. The declining dockyard industry of Balmain had meant harbour views and cheap rents for the first wave of artists. But it was also a suburb redolent of waterfront crime and corruption, and some of this found its way in Williamson's *Sons of Cain.* Morris West, veteran novelist of Italian, South East Asian and North American corruption, captured this Sydney world with *Cassidy.*

The University of Sydney, with its splendid Gothic Quadrangle and Great Hall, is another rich literary site. Christina Stead studied and taught at the Teachers' College here in the 1920s, and describes it in *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* and *For Love Alone.* The modernist poet Christopher Brennan was dismissed for adultery in 1925 after his mistress was killed by a tram. Now a building is named after him, adjoining, and surely splitting apart from, the Mungo MacCallum Building named after the vice-chancellor and Shakespearean scholar who dismissed him. In later years the poets A.D. Hope and James McAuley and Les Murray were students, and David Malouf, Germaine Greer, Howard Jacobson, and Michael Wilding academics here.

For all the energy and the louche charm of the waterfront and inner city nightlife, Sydney always offered the rival attractions of splendid beaches and a great climate rivalling any Côte d'Azure or Mediterranean island. Morris West and Thomas Keneally both chose to live up on the peninsula between the ocean and Pittwater, setting of Keneally's *Passenger* (1979). The poet Robert Adamson settled on the Hawkesbury river just north of Sydney, inspirational source for some of his most memorable poems. Les Murray, the poet of rural values, lived for many years in the suburb of Chatswood before heading out of Sydney for the bush at Bunyah. He shows the country's suspicion of Sydney in 'Explaining to the Fencers':

> Uncle Clarrie reckoned when he knew Sydney first, it
> was a lazy dangerous town five stories high
> with razors up lanes, trams crushing stained corn,
> hawkers spitting,
> straw hats on the ferry, shopgirls indignant about
> everything -
> It was never a village. But now it'd hold even more
> people who never in their lives have to know the score.

The *éminence grise* through many of these years was Patrick White, who led a Greta Garbo existence of wanting to be alone for many decades, until his involvement in environmental issues in his later years.

Returning to Australia in the 1950s he initially settled at Castle Hill on the outskirts of Sydney and bred goats. *The Tree of Man* (1955) portrays that district, and the encroachment of the huge city on the early settlements. Later he moved into a house at 20 Martin Road, overlooking Centennial Park, scene of his play and film *The Night the Prowler.* White's portrayal of Sydney ranges from the suburbs of *Riders in the Chariot* to the inner city artistic world of *The Vivisector* (1970) and back to colonial times with *Voss.* White created a particularly awful suburb, Sarsaparilla, for his portrayal of the Australian middle class.

Whereas Sydney has the raffish quality of a cosmopolitan port, Melbourne boasts elegant European boulevardes. One of the world's earliest crime novels,*The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886), is set in East Melbourne where its author, Fergus Hume, lived from 1885-8. Marcus Clarke celebrated the Melbourne literary life of the 1870s and 80s in stories and journalism, though he is best known for his novel of the convict system, *His Natural Life* (1874) which is set primarily in the prison settlements of Port Arthur in Tasmania, and on Norfolk Island. The Port Arthur prison still stands, redolent of crime and punishment. Convictism is dealt with fictionally in Hal Porter's *The Tilted Cross* also set in Tasmania, and Thomas Keneally's *Bring Larks and Heroes,* set in New South Wales, and in Robert Hughes' *The Fabled Shore* (1987).

One of the great chroniclers of Melbourne and Victoria, was Henry Handel Richardson, born Ethel Florence Richardson at 1 Blanche Terrace, Victoria Street, Fitzroy 3 January, 1870, and educated at Presbyterian Ladies' College, East Melbourne, settings she evokes in *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910) and *Myself When Young* (1948). She is best remembered for her classic trilogy *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney,* much of which is set in rural Victoria - Ballarat, Geelong and Koroit.

The other great chronicler of Melbourne was Martin Boyd (1893-1972) whose novels *Lucinda Brayford* (1946), *The Cardboard Crown* (1952) and *A Difficult Young Man* (1955) record upper middle class life in St Kilda, and Toorak which, he wrote, 'with its neighbour South Yarra became the Mayfair of Melbourne.' Graham McInnes, the son of Angela Thirkell, called Toorak 'the Belgravia of Melbourne' and recalls it in *The Road to Gundagai* (1965). Working class life and artistic aspirations are vividly recalled in George Johnston's immensely popular *My Brother Jack* (1964) set in Elsternwick and the city.

Melbourne like Sydney had its literary revival in the late 1960s and '70s. Playwriting especially thrived, and Carlton, the suburb neighbouring the university, was the site of both the La Mama Theatre, and the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory, the theatre which performed the early work of David Williamson, John Romeril, and Jack Hibberd. Williamson's *Don's Party* is a classic of Melbourne election night, *The Removalists* deals with a less than friendly neighbourhood police force, and *The Club* with a particularly Melbourne obsession, football - the theme of Barry Oakley's novel, *Salute to the Great McCarthy.*

Melbourne in the fifties and the sixties had a strong left-wing literary group. John Morrison wrote about the docks, and Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory* captured the interrelationships of politics and crime in the suburb Collingwood that he fictionalised as Carringbush.

Australia has since colonization always been an immigrant society, and the migrants characteristically settled in the major cities in which they landed. Judah Waten memorably captured the life of Jewish migrants in Carlton in *Distant Land* (1960), and Morris Lurie has treated the milieu in an engagingly comic vein in his stories and novels. As the inner-city working class suburbs became first of all bohemian, and then gentrified, they passed through another literary incarnation. The neighbouring Fitzroy, is the setting for Helen Garner's novel of sex and drugs, *Monkey Grip;* and the university itself and its immediate environs are a recurrent landscape in the work of the poets Vincent Buckley, and Chris Wallace-Crabbe. Of contemporary novelists, Gerald Murnane offers the most obsessive and detailed portrayal of Melbourne and its suburbs.

The Atlas of Literature, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, DeAgostini Editions, London, 1996.

Secrets of the Archives

The first piece of writing for which I got paid was an article in the local weekly paper. I was young, just eighteen, marking time between leaving school and going to university. The paper, *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, claimed to be the oldest newspaper in the world, dating from the seventeenth-century. My article, 'Miserrimus: the story of a cathedral stone', appeared on April the first, 1960. To have an article called, to translate the Latin, 'most wretched man', and to have it appearing on April Fool's day may not have been the most auspicious start to a literary career.

The tombstone in Worcester Cathedral with the single word inscription had prompted William Wordsworth to write a sonnet, and it was this literary association that had prompted me to write my article. Having discovered the sonnet in Wordsworth's collected poems, I went down to the cathedral and there indeed was the tombstone.

I researched the unhappy man in some local histories and found he had been a seventeenth-century clergyman, Thomas Morris, who refused to swear the oath of allegiance to William of Orange, the Dutch protestant brought into England in 1688 to replace the deposed Catholic King James. As a consequence Morris lost his living as a canon of the cathedral and vicar of the parish of Claines. It was the parish in which I had grown up.

Wanting to be a writer I was eagerly looking for signs of any writers or writing associated with the provincial world I lived in. Could there be writers outside of London or Paris or other remote metropolises? Well, Wordsworth had visited my home town, presumably, and written that sonnet, so there might be hope. Maybe other writers had visited. To be a writer you need something to write about. Writing about local literary associations could provide some of the materials I needed.

My English master had given me a two volume book recording all of the documents associated with Shakespeare's life, every known, surviving record of baptism, marriage and financial transactions. Two documents were listed as having been held in the Worcester Diocesan Records Office but their whereabouts were now unknown, according to the book. Shakespeare had been born in Stratford-upon-Avon which in 1582 was in the diocese of Worcester.

So I went down to the records office, housed in an old church near the cathedral, St Helen's, and inquired whether the documents still existed. I was shown the card index catalogue, found the two items listed, and ordered them up from the archives. They came, not lost at all. But while I was down there, I came across two much more interesting documents. One was a licence for Wm Shaxpere to marry Annõ Whateley of Temple

Grafton. The other issued the following day was a marriage licence bond for Willm Shagspere to marry Anne Hathwey of Stratford-upon-Avon with only one reading of the banns. Scholars still lack agreement on the meaning of the documents. Had Shakespeare been planning to marry Anne Whateley, but was then coerced into marrying Anne Hathaway? Or was Whateley just a misspelling of Hathaway? But could Temple Grafton be a clerical error for Stratford-upon-Avon? No record of the marriage taking place has been found.

My second article for the local paper, raising the various possibilities, duly appeared: 'Did Shakespeare Ever Marry?' asks R.M. Wilding. A couple of weeks later the director of the Shakespeare Memorial Trust was reported in the same paper as warning, 'Disregard any reports you may have read recently concerning William Shakespeare... Shakespeare was a very decent man, and you would have welcomed him, or at least his daughter, into your house,' he assured the public.

The archives were a fascinating resource for a writer or an historian. I spent many an hour there. There was a machine that used ultra-violet light to make the faded ink on old documents legible, which was the height of technology. But the main difficulty was reading sixteenth and seventeenth-century handwriting styles, very different from the present day. They were not easily read. A distinguished local historian had spent years transcribing the quarter sessions court records for publication, but when he died no one could read his handwriting, and they remained unpublished.

I had been recalling the archives and planning an article about them when I dropped into a charity shop to find something to read. Now that the University of Sydney library has emptied the stacks of half a million volumes and deposited them off-campus, it is hard to find much to read on the open shelves. Vinnies' has more to offer. On this occasion I picked up a memoir, *Open Secret*, by Stella Rimington, the first woman director-general of Britain's domestic intelligence agency, MI5, and author of a number of spy novels I had enjoyed. Leafing through the pages I found that from mid-1959 to the end of 1961 she had been an assistant archivist in the Worcester County Record Office. The very years I used to haunt the place.

Ever since writing my column on conspiracies and paranoia for another weekly paper, *Nation Review*, in the late 1970s I had developed an unhealthy interest in spooks and surveillance. And to think that I might have literally brushed shoulders with this female super-spook, if she called in at St Helen's church for something not in the Shirehall head office. Of course this was before she had joined MI5. Or so she wrote. But could you trust the words of the director a spy agency? I tried in vain to remember if there had been any young lady who had tried to recruit me in the shadows of that old church. Or had I delivered some subversive views even at that age, had I blotted my copy-book as far back as then?

One of her recollections of those days chimes in with mine. She writes: 'Some of our most frequent customers were the Mormons and their representatives. They were researching the ancestors of fellow Mormons, by searching for names, usually in the parish records. My understanding was that if the ancestors could be identified their names would be written down and they would be posthumously baptised so that their spirits would pass from wherever they were into the Mormon heaven.'

I remembered this bizarre behaviour of the Mormons. But by the time of my *Nation Review* column twenty years later, some of us had developed new theories about what the Mormons were up to. One of the alleged tricks of intelligence agencies, it was revealed in the 1960s, was to search through registers of births and deaths, find someone who had died young, and use their birth date to obtain documents in their name and create a false identity to be used by some spy going undercover. Were the Mormons in fact working for the CIA or FBI to fabricate legends for their undercover spies? Indeed, was the later to be director of MI5 doing something similar?

This theme of stealing identities from parish records cropped up again in my researches. Another local figure was Edward Kelly, the alchemist and associate of Dr Dee. I had published a book about Dee and Kelly, *Raising Spirits, Making Gold and Swapping Lives: the True Adventures of Dr John Dee and Sir Edward Kelly.* Since its publication twenty years ago new material on Kelly had surfaced and I began updating it for a new edition. I was in touch with an American academic, Terry Burns who with another American scholar, Vincent Bridges, had written a book about Kelly, *An Alchemical Enigma*. They both argued that the person who made gold at the Emperor Rudolf's court was not the Edward Kelly born in Worcester, but some other figure who had adopted the identity of the Worcester man from the parish records. Naturally, I prefer to keep Kelly as the product of my own home town.

Teresa Burns also drew my attention to a recently discovered document in a German archive. It is a letter from Sir Richard Bingham, Governor of Connaught, authenticating Kelly's claim to be of noble Irish descent. Kelly had been thrown in gaol by the Emperor Rudolf and the letter may have been an attempt to get him rehabilitated. Bingham was a correspondent of Sir Francis Walsingham, who ran secret service operations for Queen Elizabeth. Kelly may well have been some sort of agent for Walsingham, though naturally it is impossible to find any unambiguous evidence for this. But the name Bingham resonates in this context.

Charlotte Bingham is a prolific contemporary novelist and I recently read her memoir *MI5 and Me* – a hilarious account of working for an intelligence agency. She got the job because her father, John Bingham, worked for MI6, where he was John le Carré's boss and encouraged him to begin writing. A recent biography of Bingham, *The Man Who Was Smiley*, suggests he was a model for le Carré's Smiley character. Bingham

himself wrote crime and spy novels: he was also an Irish peer, the 7th Baron Clanmorris. Presumably he is a descendant of that sixteenth-century Bingham of Ireland, a family familiar with espionage operations over generations – though I have yet to do the genealogical research to prove it.

The aura of espionage seems to permeate archival records. When I was researching *The Paraguayan Experiment*, my book about William Lane's New Australia settlement, I tracked down a Confidential Memorandum to the British Foreign Office about the settlement by M. de C. Findlay, preserved in the Public Record Office at Kew. I found it suggestive that the British Foreign Office was keeping watch on New Australia. But it was not till thirty years later when reading Andrew Cook's *M. MI5's First Spymaster* that I came across M. de C. Findlay again and my suspicions about his role were confirmed: 'I Manfeldt de Cardonnel Findlay, acknowledge to have received from Sir Edward Grey, Baronet, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the sum of twenty-five pounds (£25) for the purposes of His Majesty's Foreign Secret Service, and I do hereby solemnly declare that the said sum has been disbursed faithfully and according to my best judgement for those purposes...'And a few years later reading Christopher Andrew's *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*, I found Findlay was mentioned again, when the informant exposing Roger Casement's activities supporting the Irish rebellion, 'made secret contat with the British minister, Mansfeldt de Carbonnel Findlay, and gave him copies of several incriminating documents Casement was carrying with him.'

There were other materials about Lane in Fisher Library at the University of Sydney and I was allowed into the rare book stacks at one point to see them. By chance I happened to notice a near by shelf of boxes containing the papers of Alf Conlon, who ran a mysterious research unit in Sydney's Victoria Barracks during the second world war, along with James McAuley and Harold Stewart. A note was stuck onto the side of one of the boxes. 'If anyone asks for these, say we do not have them.' Though when I mentioned this to Stephen Conlon, Alf's nephew, he was sceptical that there might have been any secret service implications. 'He probably wrote the note himself,' he said.

Annals Australasia, 130, 6, August 2019; *Brazen Head*, 17 December 2020.

Writers' Circles

Writing is a solitary activity. Just you and your pen or pencil or keyboard. Unless you happen to be dictating. And even then you could be dictating into a machine. But writing also has its social needs. It generally hopes to be read. It desires an audience. And predicting an audience response without an audience on hand can be difficult.

When I first began to write, I was still at school. My English master encouraged writers and had established a writing society that met after school every week or so, the Adam Lindsay Gordon Society, named after the poet who had been a pupil there, before being summarily removed and sent to Australia. We used to read our efforts to each other and we developed a confidence. And once I had left school I was invited to join the Writers' Circle in town. This was an adult group that met every month in the public library.

It was an amazingly diverse group. My English master, Edgar Billingham, presided. He had published a volume of poetry that had gone into three printings, and currently was writing a radio serial about a football team, 'Up the Barchester Rovers!' I would listen to it on the radio with my parents, even though I had no interest in football. This was writing that had achieved an audience.

Radio provided an important outlet. One of the members of the group, Roy Plumb, regularly had stories broadcast on 'Morning Story' and later published a well-received novel. It was to this 'Morning Story' programme that I sold my first short story. Another member, Frank Rayer, was an electrician and radio repairer who was a science fiction writer, well-known to aficionados. Then there was an undergraduate who turned up in university vacations, Michael Alexander. An enthusiast for Ezra Pound, he had been influenced by Pound's translations of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and in due course he translated a volume of Anglo-Saxon poems and the epic *Beowulf* for Penguin Classics. And there were the predictable eccentrics, including the poet who wrote a letter to the local newspaper, complaining about the introduction of daylight saving on the grounds that it confused and upset the local bird life. Though she had a point: if you were in the habit of putting out the breakfast crumbs at nine every morning for the birds, they would indeed be confused when overnight the crumbs appeared an hour earlier or an hour later.

Writing groups like this were widespread in the 1960s, and some of them continue at the present time. They provided a significant link between the amateur and the professional. Most of the members achieved publication or broadcast, though none of them was occupied in writing full time. They were amateurs in the traditional sense of the term, amateur simply denoting the opposite of professional. Professional cricketers and jockeys played and rode for a living; amateurs had comparable skills but were not playing or riding for money.

Amateur did not have that pejorative sense that has developed as our society has become concerned primarily with cash values.

The existence of these regular writers' circle meetings provided a welcome stimulus and encouragement. When I went to university, I used to go to the circle in vacations. University itself had no similar group that I knew of. Instead it had a number of university magazines and newspapers, and it was in writing for these that I continued to develop my writing. That was how you learned to write – by writing for available publications. And university in those days allowed that development, by the existence of such magazines and by allowing the opportunity to write for them. After the first two terms, I had no more examinations until the end of my third year. There were the weekly essays I had to write for my tutor. These I would read out, but they were never marked. Apart from that, my time was free to allocate according to my priorities. For two whole terms I did very little academic work as I had become assistant editor and then editor of one of the weekly magazines, *Isis*. This was a recognized stepping stone to a literary or journalistic or political career. It was tacitly accepted that you would catch up with your academic studies later – and indeed for the remainder of my university course I was working very hard indeed to catch up.

But by the 1970s universities had changed. It was claimed that examinations were stressful and not the best way to assess work. Assessment increasingly began to be made by essays. And soon every course began to require a formal essay or test at its completion, and these came to replace end of year exams. The era of the treadmill of continuous assessment had begun. No longer was it possible for a student to spend large amounts of time in student journalism or theatre or politics, the traditional way of developing skills in those areas.

It was in the context of three or four years of continuous assessment at university that I introduced creative writing to the University of Sydney. The pressure of continuous assessment had made it very hard for a would-be writer there. Course requirements, and increasingly the need to find a part time job, meant that in those years in which writers used to be developing their skills, there was now little time to write. Offering an opportunity to write in the context of a literature course seemed to be a way of helping would-be writers. What I had in mind was basically the model of those writers' circle meetings, in which writers read their work to each other, commented on it, made suggestions for improvements, and developed by the simple process of practice and encouragement.

And the context of a literature course was important. One of the basic ways writers develop their skills is by reading other writers. This was an opportunity courses in English Literature used to provide. That was why would-be writers enrolled in courses in English Literature. Now, however, literature courses have been badly eroded. Literary theory, communications and increasingly creative writing courses have occupied those spots

in the syllabus that used to involve the study of literature, while the study of literature is becoming marginalised. Creative writing has expanded absurdly, becoming a compulsory course in some institutions. This is ridiculous. Only a handful of students are going to be writers.

The value of writing courses is that they provide the opportunity for would-be writers to develop. It is a matter of opportunity and time, not instruction. To quote the ancient proverb, *Poeta nascitur, non fit*, a poet is born not made. The key to successful writing courses, Malcolm Bradbury told me, is to select the students who show that they know how to write already.

Annals Australasia, 130, 5, July 2019.

The Lure of Editing

It is one thing to decide that you want to become a writer. It is not that hard to write something, if you are determined. But the problem that immediately arises is what to do with what you have written. Where will you publish it? And it is at this point that writers find themselves lured into the role of editor and publisher.

I remember the American poet Ted Berrigan giving some advice at a poetry conference on how to make poetry a career. To be a poet, he explained, you have to write poems and publish them. And in order to do that, you find other poets, people you know writing poems, you put your poems together with theirs, type them onto stencils, run them off on a duplicator, and you have a magazine. Then you find out other poets whose work you admire, ask them to send poems to your magazine, find out other poets who are editors and you ask them for poems and they ask you to contribute to their magazines. And so you assemble a network through the mails, sending out these sheafs of poems, little magazines produced on institutional equipment, duplicators, off-set presses, photocopiers, mailed out at institutional expense to poets at other institutions. A list of publications begins to emerge, the core of a curriculum vitae, poems, poems in magazines, poems gathered in slim samplings, booklets, books, you have sewn yourself into the professional world of poetry, you have the credibility to teach poetry institutionally, you get hired, the first struggle is over, after that conferences, international travel.

The days of the stencil and duplicator are long since past. But that was how I began, that was how I produced the first magazine that I edited. Having refused to join the army cadet core at school, I was relegated to the gardening squad; but then I was transferred to help out in the bursar's office. The bursar's office was a nest of dissidents, three other students who had professed pacifism and were now assigned to office tasks. And office tasks included using the duplicator, the old Gestetner or Roneo. The machine gun of the revolution, as it was called. Having learned how to operate it we, a friend and I, produced an alternative school magazine and sold it along the morning bun queue amidst the doughnuts and Chelsea buns. We financed it by selling advertisements to shops near the school. They may have thought they were advertising in the official school magazine but we did not enlighten them. Our intentions were subversive. I contributed a story about the horrors of the compulsory cross-country runs that we suffered and my co-editor launched some similar attack on the school's traditions. In those days it was traditional to rebel against tradition, and it was no less traditional for schools to tolerate rebels and allow them a social role.

After that I edited the official school magazine, but the requirements of publishing all those reports on school games, school plays and the rest of it allowed little room for disruption. My co-editor of our unofficial

magazine had by then been expelled. I included a story and a poem I had written and presented an image of respectability. I was in print.

Arriving at university I found that pretty well everyone there had edited their school magazine. Certainly everyone who turned up to write for the two student papers that existed. I submitted a story to the weekly magazine, *Isis*, which was rejected. But editors changed every term and the following term I submitted the story again and it was published. It was an early lesson in the practicalities of getting published. Never take no for an answer. In due course I wrote news reports, then articles, then became assistant editor, and then editor. I assembled a marvellous staff – including a columnist who became a barrister and head of an Oxford college, a poetry editor who became Buddhist chaplain to a maximum security prison, and a news reporter who became a television celebrity with the Monte Python team. I loved it. I was hooked into the mystique of editing.

Arriving as a lecturer in the University of Sydney in 1963, I found the English Department the site of a fierce ideological battle between the followers of the Cambridge critic F. R. Leavis and the more pluralistic rest of the department. The Leavisites, who had in the main migrated from Melbourne, had an academic journal, the *Melbourne Critical Review*, soon retitled as *The Critical Review: Melbourne – Sydney*. It proclaimed the official line – which authors were to be celebrated (like Donne, Hopkins, George Eliot, Lawrence), and which to be dismissed (like Shelley, Milton, Meredith). The Leavisites were attempting to impose a totalitarian control of the syllabus and critical line that was taught. And so once again I found some fellow dissidents and we established an alternative magazine. It was determinedly eclectic, not only in the critical approaches of its essays, but also in its inclusion of fiction and poetry. We recruited international contributors like Christopher Ricks and D. J. Enright and we had Bill Collins writing on movies. It was called *Balcony* – for no other reason than that the designer had a photograph of a Paddington cast-iron balcony he wanted to use, and we couldn't think up – or agree on – any other name.

Balcony ran for six issues. In its turn it provoked Howard Jacobson to create another magazine for the Leavisite cause, which he called *Harpoon*. After which another colleague, Bill Maidment, revived a libertarian magazine called *Pluralist*. And alongside all these efforts was that important journal of Australian writing, *Southerly*, edited in the department since 1939. What a battle of the books it was!

Those were the days of magazine wars. Not long afterwards the long established *Poetry Magazine* experienced a series of skirmishes and coups and ended up dividing itself into two separate publications with separate aesthetics, *Poetry Australia* and *New Poetry*. In Melbourne these literary confrontations were formalized into the annual cricket match between *Overland* and *Meanjin*. Laurie Clancy wrote a highly imaginative novel based on it, but one not to be taken too literally.

And so magazines became part of my experience of the literary world. Not every writer gets caught up with the lure of editing. The majority don't. But editing famously drew into its grasp Charles Dickens and William Thackeray and Anthony Trollope. Trollope even published a collection of stories, *An Editor's Tales*, based on his not especially successful experiences editing *St Paul's Magazine*. In the following century G.K. Chesterton edited *G.K.'s Weekly* and T.S. Eliot edited *The Criterion*. In nineteenth-century Australia Marcus Clarke edited the *Colonial Monthly*, *Humbug*, and the *Australian Journal*, and John Farrell, as Father Stenhouse records in his study of Farrell's life and work, edited a succession of newspapers, including the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, while continuing to write and publish his poetry. In the twentieth century Jack Lindsay edited *Vision* and James McAuley edited *Quadrant*.

But like book-reviewing, editing can make you enemies. Making enemies is one of the hazards of being a writer: perhaps in some cases of especially irascible writers like Evelyn Waugh, it is one of the pleasures. The basic problem with editing is that of rejecting people's contributions. When I was co-editing the short story magazine *Tabloid Story*, my co-editors decided that perfunctory rejection slips were insulting to writers. So we printed out A4 pages with boxes for each of the four editors to record their response to every story submitted – not just a yes or a not but some considered assessment. It was a disastrous idea and alienated writer after writer who did not appreciate detailed, or even superficial, analyses of their failings. The resentments persisted for years, decades.

Similarly I provoked considerable hostility when I was Australian editor of an English literary magazine, *Stand*, edited by the poet Jon Silkin. I solicited contributions from writers I knew and sent them across to him. But Silkin had the final word and made the final selection. Les Murray and Frank Moorhouse were amongst those all too many writers who were most put out to have been solicited and then rejected.

Why get caught up in editing? Why make enemies by rejecting fellow writers? The attractions are not simply those of finding a home for one's own writing. There is the appeal of working with other people. Writing is a solitary occupation. But with editing you engage with other writers, as well as with designers and artists and printers. It becomes a whole collective, co-operative effort. At its best it allows, indeed creates, a sense of community, the participation in and the achievement of a common aim. Which is how you get drawn into it. And which is why it remains a constant temptation.

Annals Australasia, 130, 7, September 2019.

Heart Attack

The thing about writing, we always used to say, is you can make use of anything. Everything. Even the bad things. Like a heart attack. To a writer the bad things, bad as they are, can be turned into good things. They become material. Something to write about. The worst thing for a writer is to have nothing to write about. So even having bad things can be good. All experience is sought out so, as Marcus Clarke put it, recalling a misspent adulthood: 'we absorbed wine and women, and hate and love into us, that we might be able to write those magnificent articles....'

Not that I felt this immediately. In fact in the immediate I didn't feel anything at all. Just a dull indisposition. I remember killing time, as it were, before my appointment with my acupuncturist, and going into Santos' health food shop in Byron Bay and bumping into another writer. It was Marele Day, fresh from a hectic promotional tour for her latest book in Japan and New Zealand. Normally such success stories from a fellow writer induce envy and resentment. But my own reaction was, poor Marele, what a nightmare, having to do all those signings, all that travelling. That was how bad I felt.

And yes, it was my acupuncturist who saved me, picked up immediately that my pulses were not as they should have been, suggested I might have had a heart attack and should see a doctor. And then it was all out of my control, the doctor booking me into hospital, my car abandoned in the surgery car park. I worried about the vegetables I had just bought, persuaded the doctor's nurse to take them. Otherwise they'll just decay. Like me. In such times it is the small detail that is easiest to focus on. The unthinkable big picture left unexamined.

I quite enjoyed the hospital. I remember my father saying the same thing once and I had found it puzzling then. But now I understood. Everything beyond one's control, everything taken care of. Hopefully so, anyway. Nothing you can do about it, that's for certain. I had to wait there till the warfarin in my bloodstream declined. Otherwise my blood would not coagulate after surgery. Things I could not bear to think about and prefer to pass over now. All that travelling, deep vein thrombosis from the literary life, buzzing around the globe in economy class seats.

'You're one of the lucky ones,' said the nurse.

'Lucky ones?'

'Who survived,' she said.

I hadn't thought of it like that. I still couldn't accept the full enormity of it all.

I remembered the Yugoslav airhostess who fell out of an airplane and landed safely in a tree. They told her she was lucky, too.

'Lucky,' she said, 'if I was lucky I wouldn't have fallen out of the plane.'

I began making plans. Plans to stop making plans. Plans to reduce stress. Stress being the great factor in inducing heart problems. Apart from smoking. Well, I would have to give that up too.

But reducing stress, that wasn't too hard. I phoned up Irina Dunn at the New South Wales Writers' Centre and said I would be resigning as chair. Enough of those weekends spent in writing the acquittal to the literature board, those hours hammering out the report for the annual general meeting. Enough of planning festivals and worrying about cash flows and equity and political correctness and diversity and all those other worrying things.

The phone call left me feeling weak and exhausted. Phone calls continued to do so for a while. But overall it was a good feeling, giving up things.

But as everyone points up, giving up everything can be a problem too. Removing stress is one thing. Removing any reason to keep on living is another. Giving up smoking, yes, a virtuous feeling. Giving up drinking, too. But that didn't last. After a couple of months and recovery, it was nice to enjoy the odd glass of wine. Or two. And then one or two more.

The problem becomes, however, what else? Apart from the odd drink or two or three. Or more. The stressful activities reduced, a life of sitting around reading crime fiction and having a drink stretched ahead. Not that there is anything wrong in reading crime fiction. Marele Day had written some excellent novels in the genre. I read them. Peter Corris had written fifty or more. It kept me busy, catching up on them. For a change I began writing some myself. Thank heavens for writing. It fills up the morning hours before you go out for lunch and have a drink.

And so the years passed, as William Burroughs puts it.

It came to me, not in a flash, no more than the heart attack came in a flash, but more in a dull realization, that at some subconscious level I was just marking time, having a drink while waiting to die. No sudden revelation. But a painful enough one. I did my walks on the beach, not enough, but I did them. Collected a huge amount of shells. They overflowed from the window sills. What else could I find to collect? Or maybe I should start taking them back to the beach and liberating them, like my acupuncturist's partner, who bought them from gift shops and returned them to the sea.

Rehabilitation. You think you are rehabilitated, recovered. But at another level you are guarding yourself, protecting yourself, which comes close to not doing much at all. Travel seems contra-indicated. The heart specialist encouraged activity.

'Mowing, yes, as much as you can,' he assured me.

It didn't appeal that much but I did it. When the grass got too menacing. Keep the snakes at bay. But there was still this underlying fear, fear of stress, of strain, pretty well fear of living. So that apart from the substitute excitement of crime fiction it was one of those equable lives. The sort of existence that creates the repressed horror in Henry James's stories. The unlived life. The man who is singled out for something special, something unique, a life, he finally realizes, as the beast in the jungle leaps, in which nothing has ever happened. So there I was, so busy surviving that I was avoiding living. Just marking time.

It took a while to realize it. It wasn't as if I was doing nothing. Writing a bit, drinking a bit more. But not much else. Waiting for the end, basically.

By eight thirty or nine at night, nodding off after a few drinks, might as well go to bed as fall asleep in the chair, solves the problem of what to do with the rest of the day, give it away, sleep through it. Same with the afternoons, siesta supposedly good for the health, something to do when you don't have anything else to do.

That was when I gave up drinking. It left an awful lot of time in the day. And at night too, as the evenings stretched on, instead of lapsing into sleep before the television. In due course it meant a huge amount of restored energy. Getting up the steps two at a time. Not waking up tired. I still read the occasional crime novel. Peter Corris was producing them at the rate of two a year. I began reading heavier stuff, too. Started a research project. Spent time in the library. Started a publishing project, Press On. Not named after any heart resuscitation technique. Well, not consciously.

And I finally wrote about the heart attack. I had been working on a novel about early retirement, growing old ungracefully, *Superfluous Men*. It kept me busy, kept me amused. Twenty-six chapters. I had pretty well finished it when I came up with the idea of a heart attack anthology. With contributions from all my fellow writers who had similarly been attacked – Peter Corris, David Williamson, Angelo Loukakis, Don Anderson and more, many more. So, I thought, why not write an episode for the anthology that can double up as a chapter for the novel, always being one to maximize the use of anything I wrote. So that's what I did. Planned an anthology on heart disease. You can still have lunch without a drink. Peter Corris and I had lots, lunches that is, planning the anthology. And finally writing about the event.

It had taken a while. I realize now, for all that talk of writers making use of everything, I had been in denial. Repressing it, shutting it out. Here was this material and I had never got round to using it. Obvious, really. The obvious subject matter, and yet the last episode to get written. But it had been waiting there for me. Something there to write about when the need came. The need to start doing something, to start living again. Or at least to start writing about living again.

But more than that, maybe the heart attack had been waiting for me all along. The signs had been posted, yet I had never known. I was reading about the emperor Hadrian. Coins of his reign offer a detailed portrait, his ear-lobes marked with deep grooves at their base. Signs, say the historians, of the heart disease from which he died. Signs of a hereditary predisposition to heart disease, say some medical observers. I checked with the mirror. Yes, as I thought, I had noticed them from time to time, and never thought they had any significance. Now I knew. The sort of thing to make a character in a crime novel quite paranoid. A hereditary conspiracy.

Heart Matters, ed. Peter Corris and Michael Wilding, Viking, Melbourne, 2010.

Campus Tragedy

The systematic degradation of the universities has now been continuing for forty years. It began at the end of the 1970s with the election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the USA. Australia dutifully followed suit. The policies were a mixture of reprisals for the radical political activism of the 1960s and 70s, and the systematic replacement of public and state ownership by privatisation. Funding for the Arts – History, English, Philosophy etc – was drastically reduced since it was perceived that the protests had developed from those areas. Vocational courses were introduced in keeping with the new market economy business model. Staff were pressured to take early retirement. Those who remained found that the safeguards of the traditional concept of academic freedom were being removed. Tenure was steadily abolished. New appointments and promotions began to be made for a fixed term contract. If you said or wrote something deemed to be unacceptable – and the list of the unacceptable has grown rapidly – you were likely to find yourself out of a job at the end of your contract.

Then it was decided that too few students went to university. In the 1950s and 1960s around five per cent of the eligible population went to university. The new aim was exceed fifty per cent. This was easily achieved by deciding that colleges of advanced education, institutes of technology, teachers' colleges, art schools, nursing colleges should all become universities, either by changing their name or by merging with existing universities. These institutions had been primarily vocational. Their staff were often drawn from people who had had experience in industry, marketing, media and so on, and could impart practical experience. They had a higher teaching load than university staff, but they were not expected to undertake research. These institutions had generally functioned well and their students were engaged with the practical and vocational orientation of their courses.

But the more abstract and theoretical nature of university courses was not something that has engaged the vastly increased number of students. Especially as most of them are struggling to hold down jobs, and to fit their courses into spaces in their employment schedule. As a result, the traditional university courses have been dumbed down and reoriented. Foreign language courses withered away and in many cases perished. The classics of ancient Greece and Rome were taught in translation, insofar as they were taught at all. The number of characters a student of Chinese was expected to learn was halved. Indian studies shifted from historical and cultural studies to a business studies orientation. English courses withered away; exposure to works of

literature was drastically reduced, as critical theory, creative writing and other developments occupied the syllabus space, while communications and media studies, despite having little credibility in media industries, further drew away traditional students.

Other factors came into play. During the 1960s there had been two federal funding bodies for academic research in Australia, one for the arts and one for sciences. The marked difference between them was that grants for the arts were modest. The arts researcher typically asked for no more than $10,000 for some research assistance, for typing, for travel. The science grants were in the hundreds of thousands of dollars to support equipment and teams of research assistants. It was a system that functioned well. Then the two funding bodies were merged and funding became pretty well entirely on the scientific scale. Grants of hundreds of thousands of dollars were available for the arts, small grants were no longer the model. This was wasteful enough but worse was to follow. A new concept of 'teaching relief' was introduced, allowing grant recipients to use research funds to hire someone to do their teaching for them.

One justification for research funding in the arts was that the discoveries made during research fed back into teaching, ensuring teaching was of a high quality and at the cutting edge of knowledge. Now, to adapt the old saying, as for teaching, our servants shall do that for us. And these servants hired to do the teaching were all employed as part time, casual staff. They were paid around $50 an hour during teaching term; during vacations they had to apply for welfare. While the grant recipients swanned around and never saw a student, let alone imparted any knowledge. The university administrators saw these research funds as a source of finance. They appointed further administrators, on high salaries, who coached academics in how to apply for research grants. People who had acquired funding were made into 'distinguished research professors' on five year contracts. They moved from campus to campus and grant to grant, doing no teaching.

And much of the time no research conclusions were ever published. The scandal of this has never been exposed, but thousands upon thousands of tax-payers' dollars were handed out with nothing to show for it in return. The universities took their cut of the funds, the distinguished professors took their salaries, but all too often nothing was published. When a senior academic I knew tried to research into how the Australian Research Council awarded grants, he found it was impossible. All records of unsuccessful applications had been destroyed. There was no way of assessing the assessors and of examining the so called peer reviewing process. Nonetheless, the process continues. Publication used to be a mark of academic achievement. Now success in receiving funding is deemed more important. The emphasis has shifted from evidence of work produced to evidence of money received.

This is part of the shift to a business model. The universities have spent millions of dollars hiring management consultants to restructure them from their original religious and cultural foundations to corporatized machines for making money. Vice-chancellors now call themselves CEOs and are given grotesquely large salaries – $1,800,00 a year plus bonuses at the University of Sydney. Bonuses! Gratifyingly, quite a few of them have been dismissed for plagiarism and other corrupt behaviour. And the number of administrators, paid far more than teaching staff, has proliferated absurdly. One of the consequences of the merger of universities with art schools, nursing colleges, agricultural colleges and the rest, was that the heads of those institutions were all given highly paid administrative titles in the expanded university. Where there used to be a vice-chancellor and a deputy, now there are a dozen or more deputy vice-chancellors. They all seem to get sabbatical leave though rarely have any of them done any significant academic work. But this is just part of the insane growth of the administrative bureaucracies in the universities. When I first taught at the university of Sydney there used to be one administrator for every twelve members of the teaching staff. Now fewer than fifty per cent of university staff are actually involved in teaching.

And now over forty per cent of students are foreign students. The universities made themselves dependent on foreign students. They are now the economic base of the operation. Forget providing a cultural context and education for Australian students. The universities have become part of an immigration racket. Student visas allow residency, the opportunity to provide cut-price work, and the chance of citizenship. Some of the recruitment agencies that find overseas students not only receive a large finding fee but are also involved in the construction industry, building, renting and selling student apartments. This has nothing to do with education.

Indeed, it is the antithesis of education. In order to cater for the influx of foreign students, standards have been dropped, indeed abandoned. Most of the top rank of foreign students go to the USA or UK or Europe. Australia caters for the generally less able ones. And caters for them by lowering, or abandoning, standards. There are endless, authenticated stories of academics being instructed not to fail foreign students: they have paid their fees, they must be passed. Academics who attempt to maintain standards are overruled and disciplined.

Back at the beginning of the century when I published my *Academia Nuts*, I felt I had recorded the university in decline. In a comic way, of course. Campus farce. ‘Unmistakeably the last waltz,’ the *Times Higher Educational Supplement* called it. But ‘’tis not the end when we can say, this is the end.’ The decline had a lot further to go. Now my portrait of an institution in decline looks quite idyllic compared with the current state of the universities.

My former colleague Professor Barry Spurr has written a searing indictment of the way things are now in what remains of the arts in the universities. The list of issues I have raised above is a mere fraction of the overall collapse, and Professor Spurr offers as many further examples again in a new book edited by William O. Coleman, *Campus Meltdown: the Deepening Crisis in Australian Universities* (Connor Court). In fourteen chapters the contributors cover the range of university disciplines and the multitude of policy failures enacted. Tragedy rather than farce is the prevailing note.

Annals Australasia, 130, 8, October 2019; *Brazen Head*, February 2021.

Ghost Story

I have never seen a ghost. But one of the first stories I wrote was about a ghost. It was the first story I ever had published – in the school magazine, it was that long ago. Over the years it has recurred again and again, one way and another. Hauntingly, it might be said.

The school I went to in England was primarily a day school, but it had a boarding house called Whiteladies, which had been built on the site of a medieval nunnery. An old Gothic arch still stood in the headmaster's garden. Tradition had it that an underground tunnel had led from the nunnery to Worcester Cathedral, and that a nun had been trapped in the tunnel and died. The boarders claimed that her ghost still haunted the school. It provided the basis for this early story I wrote. 'She trailed along behind the others as they returned along the underground corridor... But she had sat there crying for too long. The door at the end of the passage would be closed, barred, bolted. She ran. She ran through the blackness of the corridor, on, on.'

A decade later in the 1970s I was experimenting with new modes of fiction, post-modernism before we had a name for it. We just called it the new writing. I wrote a story called 'The West Midland Underground' which consisted of a series of separate episodes and images, all offering versions of the concept of the 'underground'. These were the years of the counter-culture, the alternative media, the underground press and I was playing on those concepts, and their unlikely presence in the conservative West Midlands I had grown up in. I incorporated a couple of paragraphs about the ghost and the underground tunnel from my school magazine story into this piece, collage being one of the old modernist tricks we were experimenting with. And, self-referentialism being another new post-modern device, I referred to my having used the ghost and tunnel in another story written in the mid seventies: 'In 1959 I was writing about the nun's tunnel in the school magazine. In 1972 I add her into a story about cats in London. Why do I return to the nun's tunnel? The door was bolted. She died in the tunnel between the cathedral and the nunnery and her ghost still walks.'

'The West Midland Underground' became the title story of a collection of my stories published by the University of Queensland Press in 1975. It was reprinted in four selections of my stories published in the 1990s in Australia, England, the USA, and India (in Punjabi translation), and in a couple of anthologies.

I thought no more of it for years. Then, browsing through a second-hand bookshop not so long ago I came across a novel, *The White Ladies of Worcester: a Romance of the Twelfth Century,* by Florence L. Barclay.

First published in 1917 it had gone into a second edition in 1924. The copy I bought was in its twelfth printing. The novel is still available in digitized editions on-line.

The first chapter was called 'The Subterranean Way'. It related how 'Sister Agatha, weakened by prolonged fasting, and chancing to walk last in the procession, fainted and falling silently, remained behind, unnoticed, in the solitude and darkness... They found her frail body lying prone against the door...'

Florence Barclay (1862-1921) was an English historical novelist. Her best-selling novel *The Rosary* (1909) was made into five movie versions, a three-act French play, and translated into eight languages. She was one of three daughters of an Anglican clergyman, and her sister, Maud Ballington Booth, became leader of the Salvation Army in the USA. In 1881 Florence married the Rev Charles Barclay. They honeymooned in the Holy Land and in Shechen they are said to have discovered Jacob's Well, where Jesus met the woman of Samaria.

Was *The White Ladies of Worcester* a work entirely fictional or was it based on an historical legend? Were the accounts of the ghost still walking the corridors of the boarding school true, or was it a tall story derived not from a seven-century old event but from an early twentieth-century historical romance? I did not know.

There the story might have ended, but ghosts have a habit of reappearing. Last year the university belatedly forwarded me a batch of letters that had been sitting awaiting collection. Having retired, I had not been in to collect any mail for a while. One of the letters, posted three or four years earlier, was from the west coast of Ireland from someone who had read my early collection of stories. A West Midlander himself originally, he had bought the book because of its title. The reason he was writing to me was because of the episode about the ghost of the nun in the title story.

As a young teenager, he wrote, he had been at evensong in Worcester Cathedral one time, when a ghostly figure in medieval nun's costume had walked down the aisle. His parents had not seen it. No one else seemed to have seen it. But the vivid memory of it had stayed with him for years. And then, reading my story, he had encountered the ghost again.

Annals Australasia, 130, 1, January-February, 2019.

D. H. Lawrence in Australia

The meagre information on D. H. Lawrence's stay in Australia in 1922 has been supplemented by the publication in the 1970s of a number of his letters from Australia that were not included in the collections edited by Aldous Huxley (London. Heinemann, 1932) and Harry T. Moore (London: Heinemann, 1962). The letters are scattered amongst a number of publications, some of them from relatively obscure small and private presses. Gathered together, they fill out our picture of his visit, and offer some further illumination on *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush.* Two of Lawrence's letters to Koteliansky from Australia were included in Moore; but there are two further postcards in *The Quest for Rananim: D. H. Lawrence's Letters to S. S. Koteliansky 1914-1930***,** edited by George J. Zytaruk (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1970).

We have come down here about 40 miles south of Sydney taken such a nice little bungalow on the edge of the Pacific can bathe all to ourselves. It is queer, a big, free land, rather fascinating. But I feel awfully foreign with the people, although they are all English by origin. It is rather like the Midlands of England, the life, very familiar and rough and I just shrink away from it. (5 June, 1922)

Lawrence refers to the photograph of Thirroul on the second postcard, though unfortunately Zytaruk does not reproduce the picture: 'How do you like the look of Thirroul? The houses are all wood and tin—but it is nice here, so easy and sunny' (8 August, 1922). The year 1970 also saw the publication of the correspondence between Lawrence and his English publisher, Martin Secker—only a part of which had appeared in print before.

There arc two volumes. Secker's side of the correspondence has been issued as *Letters from A Publisher: Martin Secker to D. H. Lawrence and others 1911-1929* (London: Enitharmon Press, 1970) and includes letters to Lawrence and to his agent about *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush*. Lawrence's own letters are collected in *Letters from D.H. Lawrence to Martin Secker 1911-1930,* privately published by Martin Seeker (Ivcr, Buckinghamshire, 1970). Both books are now out of print, the former having a print run of 350 copies, the second of 500. There is one letter from Thirroul (mistranscribed as 'Thirroal') amongst the letters to Secker:

Am here in a house on the Pacific writing a novel queer sort of quite different novel, pitched in Australia…. The new novel goes well, and I hope to call it *Kangaroo* and finish it by August. Unberufen!
Australia is a weird country fascinating but humanly non-existent. Yet so much space and sun and unwornout air (11 June, 1922).

Most recently, Lawrence's correspondence with his American publisher Thomas Seltzer and Seltzer's wife Adele has been edited by Gerald M. Lacy and published as *Letters to Thomas and Adele Seltzer* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1976). It includes four letters from Thirroul and considerable discussion involving the publication of *Kangaroo* and *The Boy in the Bush.* The first letter opens:

Well we've got so far about fifty miles south of Sydney, in a little house to ourselves on the sea: very nice; a weird country, though. I have begun a novel and it seems to be going well — pitched in Australia. Heaven knows if anybody will like it no love interest at all so far don't intend any no sex. (9 June, 1922)

Lawrence wrote again, a couple of days later: 'I think I'm calling my new novel *Kangaroo.* It goes so far queer show pray the gods be with me, that I finish by August.' Ten days later (21 June) he wrote:

Here in N.S.W. not a soul knows about me. I don't present any letters of introduction: and I like that much the best. I have done more than half of the novel: the Lord alone knows what anybody will think of it: no love at all, and attempt at revolution. I do hope 1shall be able to finish it: not like Aaron, who stuck for two years, and Mr Noon, who has been now nearly two years at a full stop. But I think I see my way. Seven weeks today till we sail. No. I wouldn't like to live always in Australia unless I'd had enough of the world altogether, and wanted to lose myself. It would be a good place for that. Weird country. Has its fascination.

But *Kangaroo* didn't 'stick' and he didn't even need the seven weeks. In the fourth and finalletter from Thirroul he writes, 18 July: 'I finished *Kangaroo* on Saturday I don't suppose you'll like it a bit'.

Lawrence's fascination with Australia endured for at least a little while. Writing to Seltzer from the high altitude of Taos, New Mexico he remarked 'I am just feeling a bit dizzy and sleepy, and feel as if my own self were trailing after me like a trail of smoke, some of it still in Australia' (12 September).

Although Lawrence wrote *Kangaroo* quickly, he later made various revisions to it. In a

letter to Seeker from Taos he wrote: 'I finished *Kangaroo* and wait for Mountsier to send me the typescript. Then I'll revise it and let Curtis Brown have it' (19 September). Robert Mountsier was his American agent, and Curtis Brown his English agent at this time. An important letter to Seltzer (7 October) indicates what he would and what he would not revise:

Mountsier says he's posted me the typescript of the Australian novel *Kangaroo.* I'll revise it when it comes. He wants to publish this fall. I am neutral. He wants me to cut out my own long 'war' experience, condense it to a couple of pages for Kangaroo, and publish the 'experience' apart, perhaps with 'Democracy'. What do you say to this? I am doubtful. I asked Mountsier to send you the other typed MS of Kangaroo at once**.** I want you also, quickly, to send me on all you have to say. I am willing to make revisions of all sorts. Do you think the Australian Govt, or the Diggers might resent anything? Let me know this as soon as possible.

Ten days later, 16 October, Lawrence wrote to Seltzer:

Have gone through Kangaroo many changes — it is now as I wish it. I want to keep in the war-experience piece: and I have made a new last chapter. Now it is as I want it. and it is good. I'm glad it's done. You'll like it much better.

But he continued to make revisions. Early in the new year of 1923 he wrote to Seltzer: 'I enclose the last words of Kangaroo: the last page. Don't lose it' (4 January, 1923). Gerald Lacy fails to note that Seltzer *did* lose the last page! Secker, however, incorporated the page into the English edition. For years the American edition concluded: 'Farewell! Farewell! Farewell Victoria and Jaz's wife, farewell Australia, farewell Britain and the great Empire. Farewell! Farewell! The last streamers blowing away, like broken attachments, broken.' The additional page continued directly on from the above:

The last streamers blowing away, like broken attachments, broken heartstrings. The crowd on the wharf gone tiny in the sun. and melting away as the ship turned.

Richard watched the Observatory go by: then the Circular Quay… and so on for a final harbour cruise out through the heads.

This, and other differences between the text of the British and American editions have been fully explored by F.P. Jarvis's 'A Textual Comparison of the First British and American Edition of D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America,* 59 (1965). Jarvis notes how the British edition suffered from excisions and rewritings so that British susceptibilities would be spared the worst horrors of doctors looking up men's arses in the medical examination in the war experience of chapter 12. Because of these and other changes, and printers' errors. Jarvis concludes that the American text is the more reliable text of the novel, even though Seltzer lost the last page. Jarvis collated the British and American editions of *Kangaroo,* but did not collate these with the manuscript. But. as the letters to Seeker and to Seltzer make clear, the novel went through considerable changes between manuscript and publication. I was allowed to examine the manuscript at the University of Texas at Austin in 1969 on condition, however, that I made no notes. This made a detailed search for manuscript variants somewhat futile, since the only notes I could make had to be written from memory outside the library door. Apparently an edition of the novel was in progress. Occasionally manuscript chapters ended several paragraphs earlier than the printed version. Lawrence presumably added new material when he worked through the typescript. There were also a few - though only a few - excisions. The first half page of chapter 9 is scored out and the existing opening is written afresh between the scored out lines. And between chapters 9 and 10 a number of pages were ripped out of the manuscript exercise book. And there are interesting changes that bear on the question of the historical basis of the novel. The description of Kangaroo on his first appearance is worked over and rewritten: but there seems to be no attempt to disguise or alter the original description: the revisions seem rather to be an attempt to be more precise or vivid. This might suggest that Lawrence was trying to describe an original more closely; or that there was no original in mind and the description was somewhat faltering, unspontaneous. However there is also the possibility that there could have been an original for Kangaroo, but that the description had another source from the original. Emile Delavenay in *D.H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter* (London: Heinemann, 1971) claims that Kangaroo is 'a physical portrait of Koteliansky'. The manuscript offers something of a lead in connection with the 'Diggers'. At their first mention they are called 'Returned Soldiers'. 'Returned Soldiers' is then crossed out and 'Diggers' substituted. This could be taken to suggest that Lawrence was referring to one of the groups with 'returned soldiers' in their title that were then current. (John Alexander documents them in 'D. H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo***:** Fantasy, Fact or Fiction?', *Meanjin,* XXIV, 1965). The Diggers turn up strikingly in Lawrence's letter to Seltzer of 7 October, 1922 quoted earlier: 'Do you think the Australian Govt, or the Diggers might resent anything?' Whatever this implies about the Australian government (involvement with the Diggers, or ignorance of the Diggers), it certainly implies that Lawrence

had a particular group in mind when he wrote of the Diggers. His comment could be taken to imply an anxiety about his materials though the nature of the anxiety is ambiguous. Did he fear he had revealed things he should not have revealed? Or did he fear he had invented too freely and might have written fiction that could be construed as defamatory? Ambiguous as it is, this is the only comment of Lawrence's that supports the case that his novel drew on political actualities in Australia. Robert Darroch's researches have suggested that there could have been a specific original for Kangaroo and for the Diggers (*The Australian***,** 15 May, 1976). Jack Lindsay recalls having the 'original' for Kangaroo pointed out to him (*The Roaring Twenties*, London: Bodley Head, 1960). But none of Lawrence's letters from Australia so far published show either that he actually did know these originals, or the political situations that he 'could have' known. There is not even any evidence that he had picked up anything by hearsay, or rumour — let alone that he actually met a 'Kangaroo' or a Digger. His letters say nothing about local political activity except in the most generalized way. The letters, indeed, stress how Lawrence was isolating himself from contact, keeping away from people, concealing the fact that he was in Australia (to Seltzer, 21 June, 1922; to Luhan, 9 June, 1922; to Jaffe, 13 June, 1922; to Koteliansky, 9 July, 1922).

Gerald Lacy argues that Lawrence was transferring Venetian material to Australia. He sees a similarity between Lawrence's letter to Seltzer of 9 June, 1922 from Thirroul. and an earlier one from Sicily in which he wrote: 'I have begun a proper *story* novel in the Venetian lagoons: not pretty pretty but no sex and no problems: no love, particularly. It won't go to England at all (8 October, 1921). Lacy remarks that 'the similarity in description coupled with the rapidity of composition invite speculation that the Venetian setting may have been dropped, but a similar theme carried over'. It seems a bit unlikely though other commentators have argued that Lawrence's observations of the rise of fascism in Italy were the basis of the politics of *Kangaroo***.** But the Australian settings are so present in *Kangaroo* from the beginning that it is hard to see how the novel could have been relocated from the Venetian lagoons. But even if the apparently unfinished Venetian novel was developed into *Kangaroo***,** that need not exclude the possibility that Australian particularities were used to illustrate the transferred theme. The problem is that in none of the published letters does Lawrence once give any indication as to whether he had come across information about right-wing paramilitary clubs organizing for a revolution in Australia; or whether he had fantasized this material from newspaper items, European observation and the creative imagination, and placed it in an Australian setting.

The letters to Secker and to Seltzer also valuably illuminate further the nature of Lawrence's collaboration with Mollie Skinner on *The Boy in the Bush.* Molly Skinner's autobiography *The Fifth Sparrow* (Sydney University Press, 1972) prints the letters Lawrence wrote to her about their collaboration, including many not

in Moore. His letters to Secker and to Seltzer fill out the picture considerably. He discusses the issue of 'whether it is to be under my name and Miss Skinner's, or a *nom de plume*, or what' (18 October 1923, to Seltzer). He is happy to receive 'a thrilled letter from Miss Skinner, very pleased at our collaboration. She is nice' (17 December 1923, to Seltzer). And then arises the problem of Molly Skinner's dismay at the 'startling' ending. He writes to her: 'I have written to Secker and Seltzer to make the alterations you wish, if it is not too late. Also I tell them they may leave out both chapters at the end if they wish.'(4 April, 1924, to Skinner, in Moore II, and Skinner). But the letters he wrote to Secker and Seltzer have a rather more irritated tone:

> I had a letter from Molly Skinner, asking for a few alterations in *Boy in the Bush.* I copy them out and send them to you. If there is time, please make these little changes to please her. And if you like, omit the last chapter, or the last two chapters even. I feel fed up about the world and its pruderies and its perpetual cold in the head. One must pile cowardice on cowardice, apparently. (4 April, 1924, to Secker)

> I enclose a letter from Molly Skinner. If you have time, I wish you would make the alterations she wishes: at least the smaller ones. If you want to omit the last two chapters, I don't care. What do I care any more about the pruderies or not the pruderies. (4 April, 1924, to Seltzer)

Lawrence had warned Molly Skinner that 'if the book is set up, the publishers will not agree [to make changes] unless they wish to of their own account' (Moore II; Skinner). Neither Martin Seeker nor Gerald Lacy follow up the fate of the disputed chapters in their annotations. But Mollie Skinner makes their fate quite clear in her autobiography. 'Someone told her *The Boy in the Bush* was a reflection of herself. '"Not in the last two chapters!" I said. "Those are Lawrence."'

The possibility that Lawrence might collaborate on her next novel, *Black Swans* is raised in Lawrence's letters to Secker and in Secker's correspondence (*Letters from a Publisher*) but this is not mentioned in Mollie Skinner's autobiography. Perhaps she never knew the idea was being tossed around. Currently a full scale edition of Lawrence's works including his letters is being prepared for Cambridge University Press. At last existing scattered material relating to his Australian connection will be collected together. There are a number of letters from Australia included in Mabel Dodge Luhan's *Lorenzo in Taos* (London: Secker, 1933) for instance. His letters to Katharine Susannah Prichard have appeared in *Meanjin* (IX, 1950) but were not collected by Moore. Jack Lindsay recalls losing a letter from Lawrence in Nehls' *D.H. Lawrence: A*

Composite Biography (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959, reprinted in Lindsay, *Decay and Renewal***,** Wild & Woolley, Sydney, 1976). There is only one letter to P.R. Stephensen in Moore though Stephensen's publication of Lawrence's paintings would have involved more correspondence than that. Stephensen is referred to in one of Lawrence's letters to Secker, mistranscribed as 'V.R. Stephenson of the Fanfrolico Press, whom I also rather liked' (December 1928). Recently a Lawrence letter to Stephensen about Lawrence's paintings came to light in Australia (*Australian Literary Studies,* 9,1979). No doubt there are materials still to be published. And no doubt the sources of Lawrence's materials for *Kangaroo* will remain as mysterious as ever.

Australian Literary Studies, 9 (1980).

John Dee and Edward Kelly

John Dee was a sixteenth-century mathematician and scientist. But mathematics was not only a matter of numerical calculation, it also touched on astrological calculations, and Dee was commissioned to select the appropriate date for Elizabeth's coronation. Consulted by powerful statesmen such as Lord Burghley, Sir Francis Walsingham, the Earl of Leicester, and Sir Walter Raleigh, his projects often involved political issues. He was closely involved in navigational calculations for England's earliest attempts at colonising north America. He drew up a proposal for Britain to reform the calendar and to come into line with the reforms of Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. But the English church and political establishment decided this would look like too much like conformity to Rome, and so Britain remained ten days out of phase with Europe for the next 160 years.

Dee had the largest private library in England, some 2,500 books and manuscripts. But books could provide only so much information. He wanted direct access to the divine. Mediated through angels, of course. He wanted someone who could communicate with spirits. This was a fraught practice and could lead to imprisonment. In December 1581 he tried some consultations with an assistant, Barnabas Saul, who two months later was arrested, but released without charge. He promptly told Dee that 'he neither heard or saw any spiritual creature any more.'

Four days later Dee was consulting spirits with Edward Kelly who was introduced to him as a scryer, someone who could see visions in crystals, and could serve as a medium for spiritual communications.

Edward Kelly was born at Worcester on August 1, 1555, at 4 p.m. Dee recorded Kelly's date of birth in the horoscope he drew up of his nativity, and in the margins of the almanac he used as a diary. His surname is sometimes spelled Kelley, and when he first met Dee he went under the name of Edward Talbot. Dee later recorded in his diary that 'his coming was to entrap me, if I had had any dealing with wicked spirits, as he confessed often times after: and that he was set on, etc.'

In *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631) John Weever tells a story of Kelly in Lancashire engaging in the 'diabolical questioning of the dead, for the knowledge of future accidents'. Kelly

upon a certain night, in the park of Walton-in-le-dale, in the county of Lancaster, with one Paul Waring (his fellow companion in such deeds of darkness) invocated some one of the infernal regiment to know certain passages in the life, as also what might be known by the devil's foresight, of the manner and time of the death of a noble young gentleman, as then in his wardship. The black ceremonies of that night being ended, Kelly demanded of one of the gentleman's servants, what corpse was the last buried in Law church-yard, a church thereunto adjoining, who told him of a poor man that was buried there but the same day. He and the said Waring entreated this foresaid servant to go with them to the grave of the man so lately interred, which he did; and withal did help them to dig up the carcass of the poor caitiff, whom by their incantations, they made him (or rather some evil spirit through his organs) to speak, who delivered strange predictions concerning the said gentleman.

Kelly's practice with Dee was less diabolical. They proceeded to summon up a succession of angels and spirits, beginning with Uriel and Michael and moving on to the mysteriously named like Nalvage, Ath, Galva'h, and more. The latter two were female and so, according to specialists in the area like Johannes Trithemius, Abbot of Sponheim, agents of the devil. But, one of the female spirits told them, 'Angels, I say, of themselves, are neither man nor woman.' And one of the most charming of the spirits summoned up was 'like a pretty girl of seven or nine years of age.' She told them 'I am a poor little maiden, Madini.' She made a strong impression on Dee and seven years later he christened his daughter Madinia.

There were visions, fables and instructions. In large part this involved establishing a table of names and numbers which could be used to call up spiritual forces, in particular those governing political rulers. They were told that 'in receiving the calls, this is to be noted, that they are to be uttered by me backwards; and of you in practice, forwards.'

'I understand it,' said Dee, 'for the efficacy of them; else all things would appear, and so hinder our proceeding in learning.'

If they spoke the words forwards, they would summon up the angels when all they wanted to do at the moment was to write down the appropriate summoning calls. Not only were the individual words of the call spelled out in reverse, letter by letter, but the whole message was given in reverse, starting with the last word.

Kelly looked into the stone, Dee asked his questions, the spirits in the crystal spoke through Kelly, and Dee wrote down what Kelly said. No description of the stone survives, but it seems that Dee had more than one. Drawings in the margin of the spiritual records suggest that they were spherical balls, and from evidence in the

records we can assume they were of crystal. In the British Museum there is a black obsidian mirror, of Mexican origin, which is said to have belonged to Dee. It is doubtful, however, whether this was used in the scrying sessions.

The notes were later transcribed, and the records of these sessions bound up into books. Other manuscript books were compiled which abstracted and collated the information given. They survive in the British Library. The major part are recorded in MS Cotton Appendix XLVI parts I and 2. This was transcribed and published by Meric Casaubon, as *A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Years Between Dr. John Dee (A Mathematician of Great Fame in Q. Elizabeth and King James their Reignes) and Some Spirits: Tending (had it succeeded) to a General Alteration of Most States and Kingdomes in the World* (1659).

As well as spiritual instructions other information was sometimes given. Dee asked about 'the vision which yester night was presented, unlooked for, to the sight of E. K. as he sat at supper with me, in my hall, I mean: the appearing of the very sea, and many ships thereon, and the cutting off the head of a woman, by a tall black man, what are we to imagine thereof?'

He was told: 'The one did signify the provision of foreign powers against the welfare of this land: which they shall shortly put in practice: the other, the death of the Queen of Scots. It is not long unto it.' The date was May 5, 1583. Dee noted in the margin, 'The Queen of Scots to be beheaded.' At some later date he added, 'So she was, anno 1587 at Fotheringhay castle. And also the same year a great preparation of ships against England by the King of Spain, the Pope and other princes called Catholic, etc.' That was the Spanish armada of 1588. Kelly had seen into the future. Or made informed guesses.

And then a Polish count, Albert Laski, visited England and sought out Dee and Kelly. He was concerned to find out through their spirit-raising sessions if he might succeed to the Polish crown, and whether he had English ancestry. Holinshed recorded that Laski had 'a white beard of such length and breadth, as that lying in his bed, and parting it with his hands, the same overspread all his breast and shoulders, himself greatly delighting therein, and reputing it an ornament.' But though English authorities provided one of their spies as a servant to Laski, they could not discover the purpose of his visit.

In 1583 Laski, Dee and Kelly left England at dead of night and set out for Poland. They had hoped Laski would support them financially in their spiritual researches, but Laski went bankrupt. The spirits told Dee and Kelly to go to the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II, in Prague. The spirits also gave Dee messages to deliver to the Emperor Rudolf and to King Stephen of Poland, instructing them to reform their ways. It was not the most ingratiating way to secure royal patronage, but Dee did it. And he wrote to Rudolf telling him that he could make the philosopher's stone.

Dee had one audience with Rudolf, and was then fobbed off to deal with senior court officials. In the meantime rumours of the spiritual predictions of imminent apocalyptic change reached the papal nuncio, Filippo Sega, who reported to Rome that Dee and Kelly 'are on the way to being the authors of a new superstition, not to say heresy, and are known to the Emperor and all of the court.' The new nuncio, Lord Germanico Malaspina, Bishop of San Severo, asked Dee and Kelly to explain themselves to him. They delayed for eight months but finally met. Dee assured the nuncio that their activities were not irreligious. All might have been well but then Kelly delivered a diatribe about corrupt priests, which, Dee was later told, 'had so filled that most reverend lord with inward fury that he had said, if it had not been for certain respects, he would have had the said Edward thrown out of the window.' Defenestration was a traditional way of dealing with troublesome opponents in Bohemian politics.

Pressure was brought to bear on Rudolf, who then expelled Dee and Kelly from the Empire for necromancy and other prohibited arts. Four months later Rudolf relented and let them settle on the estates of Count Vilém Rožmberk, at Trebon in southern Bohemia. They undertook a series of alchemical experiments there and in December 1586 Dee recorded in his diary that 'E. K. made a public demonstration of the philosophers' stone in the proportion of one small grain, upon one ounce and a quarter of common mercury, and produced almost an ounce of most pure gold.'

Dee's son Arthur told Sir Thomas Browne, the author of *Religio Medici*, that

> Count Rožmberk was their great patron who delighted much in alchemy. I have often heard him affirm and sometimes with oaths that he had seen the projection made and transmutation of pewter dishes and flagons into silver which the goldsmiths at Prague bought of them. And that Count Rožmberk played at quoits with silver quoits made by projection as before.

And Elias Ashmole recorded that

> I have received it from a credible person, that one Broomfield and Alexander Roberts, told him they had often seen Sir Ed Kelly make projection, and in particular upon a piece of metal cut out of a warming pan, and without Sir Edward's touching or handling it, or melting the metal (only warming it in the fire) the elixir being put thereon, it was transmuted into pure silver: the warming-pan and this piece of it was sent to Queen Elizabeth by her ambassador who then lay at Prague, that by fitting the piece into the place whence it was cut out, it might exactly appear to be one part of that warming-pan.

Kelly had now become increasingly reluctant to continue summoning up spirits. He tried to train Dee's eight year old son Arthur in scrying, but without much success. Kelly then received a spiritual message that he and Dee were to hold their wives in common. The wives were unenthusiastic, but Kelly made a number of further consultations with spirits and the instruction was confirmed. The 'cross-matching' seems to have taken place on May 22, 1587, but not repeated. The following day the last known spiritual consultations Dee and Kelly held together are recorded. Years later, back in England, Dee was to experiment with other scryers. But this is the last known consultation through the medium of Kelly.

Fifty-three years later Arthur Dee gave one of the crystals that his father and Kelly had used to the apothecary Nicholas Culpeper 'as a reward for having cured a liver complaint of his with the greatest rapidity, A.D. 1640.' According to Culpeper this was the crystal that had been given to Dee by an angel in 1582, which Dee gave to Kelly, who gave it to Lord Rozmberk but then retrieved it. Culpeper recorded:

> I have used this crystal in many ways and have thus cured illnesses, but with its use a very great weakness always sets in and lethargy of the body. And further a certain demoniacal apparition which exercised itself to lewdness and other depravity with women and girls, used to tempt me, but by making the sign of the cross and speaking these words, "Pah Adonai, by thy strength am I fortified. Phorrh! Phorrh! Haricot! Gambalon!" the apparition used to fly soon or instantly, with noise and evil smell. For these obscenities I have given up the use of the crystal, and to witness these things I have written them on this sheet on the 7th day of March in the year 1651.

William Lilly bought the crystal from Culpeper's widow and tried his own experiments on it with Elias Ashmole. They conjured up 'a female devil lewd and monstrous,' he records, February 10, 1658. The crystal is now in the Wellcome collection in the Science Museum, South Kensington.

February 28, 1588, nine months after the cross-matching, Jane Dee gave birth to a boy, who was baptized the following day, and named Theodorus Trebonianus Dee. Theodorus Trebonianus, the gift of God at Trebon. Was this Dee's child or Kelly's? Did anyone ever know for sure? The question is never raised in the diary let alone answered. Could Kelly have children anyway? In the spiritual transactions of April 4, 1587, Kelly was told of his marriage, 'barrenness dwells with you,' suggesting that he was sterile. There is no record of his having children. His wife had a son and daughter by a former marriage, the daughter later famous as the neo-Latin poet Elizabeth Weston, 'Westonia.'

Kelly's achievements in producing gold soon became known to the Emperor Rudolf and to Queen Elizabeth and her senior statesman, Lord Burghley. Rudolf invited Kelly back to Prague, installed him in the court to work on alchemical experiments, and in 1589 appointed him to the order of the *Equites Aureati*. He was now Sir Edward, and possessed of considerable property. Dee returned to England.

Burghley wrote to Kelly at the instruction of Queen Elizabeth, suggesting that he might return to England and put his alchemical skills at the service of the state. Kelly replied that

> being in security, and that in a country full of peace and liberty, seised in lands of inheritance yielding £1500 yearly, incorporated to the kingdom in the second order, of some expectation and use more than vulgar, of his Majesty's privy council ... chief regent in and over all the lands and affairs of the Prince Rožmberk: I cannot see how I might easily or honestly depart, much less so steal away, for why such properties belong to a paltry minded man and to him that knows not the use of honour....
> But if it may please my most gracious sovereign and country to redress the injuries done against me heretofore and to call me home to the like honour; assuring me of so much lands of inheritance by year to serve her, as I shall leave behind me in Bohemia for her; then will I declare myself openly, take leave of his Majesty and kingdom and repair home to her highness.

Burghley then sent the poet and courtier Edward Dyer to try to persuade Kelly to return. But, suddenly, Kelly was arrested and gaoled. The English diplomat Henry Wotton made a trip to Prague and reported back that some said the arrest was for debt, others that an alchemist executed at Munich had named Kelly as an accomplice, some said that Dyer's visit made the Emperor suspect Kelly was about to return to England with his alchemical, or other, maybe political, secrets, some said Kelly had offended a powerful Czech family, the Popples, some said Kelly had prepared a medicine for the Emperor which Kelly's enemies told the Emperor was designed to poison him, and lastly some said a rival alchemist had challenged Kelly to make proof of his art and Kelly refused.

Czech reports, not known in England, said that Kelly had killed a court official in a duel. The official had been asking Kelly why one of his ears had been lopped. Kelly at some point had had one, if not both, ears lopped – a mark of punishment for some criminal offence that has never been explained. Forging title deeds and coining are often mentioned in later accounts, but no supporting evidence has ever been produced.

A flurry of English informants reported back what they could find out. Whether this was because of Queen Elizabeth's desire to get the secrets of gold production from Kelly, or because Kelly had been a source of information for Burghley about political events at the Emperor's court, is unclear.

And then towards the end of 1593, after some two and a half years in gaol in Pürglitz castle, Kelly was released, and back in favour with the Emperor. August 12, 1595, Dee records 'I received Sir Edward Kelly's letters of the Emperor's, inviting me to his service again.' Dee stayed in England, wisely enough. For November 1, 1596 Kelly was arrested again. Debt is generally believed to have been the cause.

Kelly was now imprisoned in Most Castle where he wrote his Latin treatise *The Stone of the Philosophers,* which he dedicated to Rudolf:

> Though I have already twice suffered chains and imprisonment in Bohemia, an indignity which has been offered to me in no other part of the world, yet my mind, remaining unbound, has all this time exercised itself in the study of that philosophy which is despised only by the wicked and foolish, but is praised and admired by the wise. Nay, the saying that none but fools and lawyers hate and despise alchemy has passed into a proverb.

Nonetheless, he decided to escape. John Weever wrote in *Ancient Funerall Monuments* that Queen Elizabeth

> sent (very secretly) Captain Peter Gwynne with some others, to persuade him to return back to his own native home, which he was willing to do: and thinking to escape away in the night, by stealth, as he was clambering over a wall in his own house in Prague (which bears his name to this day, and which sometime was an old sanctuary) he fell down from the battlements, broke his legs, and bruised his body; of which hurts a while after he departed this world.

It is generally believed that Kelly fell not from his house but from prison. Dee's son, Arthur, told Sir Thomas Browne

> that Kelly dealt not justly by his father and that he went away with the greatest part of the powder and was afterward imprisoned by the Emperor in a castle from whence attempting an escape down the wall he fell and broke his leg and was imprisoned again. That his father Dr John Dee presented Queen Elizabeth with a

little of the powder, who having made trial thereof attempted to get Kelly out of prison. And sent some to that purpose who giving opium in drink unto the keepers, laid them so fast asleep that Kelly found opportunity to attempt an escape and there were horses ready to carry him away! But the business unhappily succeeded as is before declared.

The Czech scholars Vladimír Karpenko and Ivo Purš write that 'what is presumably the most authentic report about Kelly's imprisonment (and his death) is given in a manuscript written by the evangelical priest, Rudolf's alchemist and seeker of precious stones, Simon Thadeas Budek of Lessino and Falkenberg':

That Keleus when he was imprisoned at the castle of Most (he had a wooden leg and was without both ears, and had long hair), was lowered through the toilet by his wife and daughter in the year 1597 at Christmas time ... His brother awaited him with a carriage, but he (Kelly) fell into a ditch and broke his leg in three places, so he was taken back to the castle to be tended to. He was to be transported to Prague to the Emperor, but he asked to have his wife and daughter with him, which they granted him. He then spoke to his wife in English and Welsh and with his daughter in Latin and asked to have some water brought to him and immediately after ingesting it he died.

Had Kelly really succeeded in producing gold? Did he really have the secret of the philosophers' stone? Or was it a trick? In 1617 in his book on pseudo-alchemists Michael Maier concluded of Kelly:

If he had anything except the colour extracted from gold, why did he not live for himself and avoid high positions, from which he would fall headlong as far as both his life and fame are concerned? However, with with his skill of extracting sulphur from gold and projecting it into metals he not only won the prince's favour and a good reputation, but he also got money and fortune. And he would not have been in need of all these if he had not been foolish and a man of very poor judgement and if he had had the real tincture.

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Milton and the English Revolution

To get a proper sense of Milton in the English revolution we need to look not only at his work during the revolutionary period, but also at his early writings in the pre revolutionary years, and at the mature works produced after the restoration. For years now the blandly disseminated view of the pre-revolutionary decades of the early seventeenth century has held that the works of English literature of those years belong to a non-political world. It was a depoliticization made possible by an unawareness of the extent and effects of censorship, and a consequent refusal to decode political meanings from the literary texts. But the revolution did not suddenly appear from nowhere. And if we look at Milton's poetry of the 1630s we can see evidence of the social tensions, and unmistakable assertions of revolutionary sentiments.

In his *Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle,* 1634, Milton has Comus, the tempter who tries to seduce the Lady, declare,

We that are of purer fire
Imitate the starry quire,
Who in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds, and seas with all their finny drove
Now to the moon in wavering morris move,
And on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves;
By dimpled book, and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove,

Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.

Come let us our rites begin ... (111-25)

(Milton's poetry is cited from *The Poems of John Milton*, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler, London, 1968.)

A.N. Wilson remarks on this passage in his *Life of Milton* (London, 1983, p.51) : ‘The gaiety, and above all the supreme tastefulness of this is what lends the verse such charm. Lovers of Milton have always regarded his *Masque* as his prettiest work.’ Charm there certainly is, and Comus as a magician was a specialist in charms. But what the celebration of the 'wavering morris', the morris dance, and 'merry wakes and pastimes' (a 'wake' was originally the vigil or feast of a patron saint) achieve is to identify Comus with the central Stuart court policy of promoting traditional sports and pastimes. James I in his Declaration of Sports of 1618, reasserted by Charles I in his Declaration of 1633, the year before Milton's *Maske* was performed, had promoted the traditional sports and pastimes as a mechanism of social control. As Christopher Hill writes in *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, London, 1961, p. 85):

> When James justified his Declaration of Sports, his reasons were: (i) men would associate the traditional sports with Popery, and become dissatisfied with the established Church if deprived of them; (ii) 'the common and meaner son' would become unfit for military service; (iii) they would go in disgust to ale-houses, and there indulge in 'a number of idle and discontented speeches'. The Laudian Bishop Pierce a few years later added a fourth objection: if men had no sports to occupy them on Sundays, they might meet for illegal religious discussion.

The traditional sports were denounced by the puritans as pagan and papist survivals. Christopher Hill notes that 'Fuller tells us that many moderate men thought the Declaration of Sports was a principal cause of the civil war' and that 'responsibility for the Declaration of Sports furnished one of the charges on the basis of which Laud was accused of high treason'. (Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in the Pre-Revolutionary England,* London, 1969, pp. 95 and 198.) In one of his first prose polemics of the revolution, *Of Reformation in England* (May, 1641), Milton makes his attitude to the sports clear. The Bishops, he asserted, hamstrung the valour of the Subject by seeking to effeminate us all at home.

Well knows every wise Nation that their Liberty consists in manly and honest labours, in sobriety and rigorous honour to the Marriage Bed, which in both Sexes should be bred up from chaste hopes to loyall Enjoyments; and when the people slacken, and fall to looseness, and riot, then doe they as much as if they laid down their necks for some wily Tyrant to get up and ride. Thus learnt Cyrus to tame the Lydians, whom by Armes could not, whils they kept themselves from Luxury; with one easy Proclamation to set up Stews, dancing, feasting, & dicing he made them soone his slaves. I know not what drift the Prelats had, whose Brokers they were to prepare, and supple us for a Foreign Invasion or Domestick oppression ... but this I am sure they took the ready way to despoile us both of manhood and grace at once, and that in the shamefullest and ungodliest manner upon that day which Gods Law, and even our own reason hath consecrated, that we might have one day at least of seven set apart wherein to examin and encrease our knowledge of God, to meditate, and commune of our Faith, our Hope, our etemall City in Heaven, and to quick'n, withall, the study and exercise of Charity; at such a time that men should bee pluck't from their soberest and saddest thoughts, and by Bishops the pretended Fathers of the Church instigated by publique Edict, and with earnest indeavour push't forward to gaming, jigging, wassailing and mixt dancing is a horror to think. Thus did the Reprobate hireling Priest Salaam seeke to subdue the Israelites to Moab, if not by force, then by this divellish Policy, to draw them from the Sanctuary of God to the luxurious, and ribald feasts of Baal-peor.
(*The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe, et al., 8 volumes, New Haven, 1953-1982, vol. I, p. 589. All quotations from Milton's prose works are from this edition, cited as *CPW*.)

The terms in which Milton phrases his indictment of these traditional sports - 'when the people slacken, and fall to looseness, and riot' and 'gaming, jigging, wassailing, and mixt dancing' are the terms in which the Lady denounces Comus's 'rites' when she first hears them:

Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,
When for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath

To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers. (171-89).

And Milton's particular outrage that such pagan sports should have been encouraged by the bishops explains why Comus is also presented as a priest, as Andrew Milner notes in *John Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1981, p. l35): ‘It is significant, too, that Milton chooses to associate the character of Comus with the notion of priesthood.’ Comus invokes Cotytto ('befriend / Us thy vowed priests' 135-6), he performs 'rites' to Cotytto and to Hecate (125, 534), and when the Lady delivers her speech for the just distribution of wealth he dismisses it with the words

Come, no more,
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation. (805-7)

This specific reference to the morris dancing, the wakes and so on promoted by the Declaration of Sports is only one of the recurrent specific references to politically explosive topics that we can find in Milton's early work. It is buried, but not hidden irrecoverably, and once noticed it encourages us to look for other such specifics. But there are also general revolutionary sentiments, not located in historic specificities but applicable to most social periods. That speech of the Lady's advocating the just distribution of wealth retains its moral and political urgency no less today than it did 350 years ago:

If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well-dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store,
And then the giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid ... (767-75)

By the time we reach 'Lycidas' in 1637, Milton's work is beginning to contain passages of heavy menace. 'Yet once more', he opens Lycidas, and for years critics accepted the reading of Cleanth Brooks and John E. Hardy in *Poems of Mr John Milton: The 1645 Edition with Essays in Analysis*, (1951, p. 170) : 'Evidently this is not the first time he has come forward with an immature performance.' But as a number of commentators have now pointed out, the phrase 'yet once more' is a Biblical allusion with very specific revolutionary implications. The Epistle to the Hebrews 12; 25-7 reads:

> See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we tum away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the eanh only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

This was the opening clue on how to read Milton's indictment of the corrupt clergy and academy of the 1630s. The Pilot of the Galilean lake, lamenting Lycidas's death, declares:

> How well could I have spared for thee, young swain
> Enow of such as for their bellies' sake,
> Creep and intrude and climb into the fold?
> The hungry sheep look up and are not fed
> But that two-handed engine at the door
> Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more. (113-31)

There has been a lot of inconclusive academic speculation about what the 'two-handed engine' might be, a morbid preoccupation with the instrument of justice that deflects attention away from Milton's primary point that justice would be done, and soon, on the corrupt clergy and teachers. When he collected 'Lycidas' in his volume of *Poems* of 1645, he spelled out his prophetic insight in a headnote to the poem, pointing out how ‘the author by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy then in their height.’ If the reader of 1637 had missed decoding the political pastoral, the reader of 1645 could not avoid the revolutionary denunciation, could not avoid seeing the poet as placed unambiguously with the forces of reform. The denunciation and promise of retribution was written when the clergy were 'then in their height.' It was not a

convenient piece of hindsight, but a committed exercise of radical foresight, an indication of the true poet's gift of political prophecy.

Of the polemical works of the revolutionary years, *Areopagitica* (1644) has undoubtedly had the widest acceptance and dissemination in the English cultural tradition. But its historical context has been obscured by its liberal reputation as 'the first work devoted primarily to freedom of the press'. (*The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe, et al., volume 2, ed. Ernest Sirluck, New Haven, 1959, p. 163. All quotations are from this edition, cited as *CPW*).

Areopagitica appeared amidst a revolution, confronting the attempt to control the press at a time when the press was pouring out increasingly radical materials. The abolition of the Court of Star Chamber in 1641 had removed the official institution that administered press censorship, but in 1643 parliament introduced a new licensing order to deal with the spate of radicalism that was taking the revolution into areas the presbyterians and bankers feared. Clarendon described the situation in his *History of the Rebellion* (Oxford, 1704):

> The Common Soldiers, as well as the officers did not only Pray, and Preach among themselves, but went up into the Pulpits in all Churches, and Preached to the People; who quickly became inspired with the same Spirit; Women as well as Men taking upon them to Pray and Preach; which made as great a noise and confusion in all opinions concerning Religion, as there was in the Civil Government of the State; scarce any Man being suffer'd to be called in question for delivering any opinion in Religion, by speaking or writing, how Prophane, Heretical or Blasphemous soever it was; "which", they said, "was to restrain the spirit." LIBERTY of Conscience was now the Common Argument and Quarrel, whilst the Presbyterian Party proceeded with equal bitterness against the several Sects as Enemies to all Godliness, as they had done, and still continued to do, against the Prelatical Party.' (III, 32).

It was just this Presbyterian attack on the sects, on the radical and progressive splinter groups, that Milton is concerned to confront *in Areopagitica*. Early in *Areopagitica* he remarked parenthetically and provocatively: 'The Christian faith, for that was once a schism ... (*CPW*, II, 529). Towards the end of the work he delivered his unforgettable defence of the sects in a passage often celebrated for its enthusiastic portrayal of London at the height of the revolution, vanguard of European reform:

> Behold now this vast City of refuge, the mansion house of liberty, encompast and surrounded with his protection; the shop of warre hath not there more anvils and hammers waking, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed Justice in defence of beleagur'd Truth, then there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty the approaching Reformation; others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement. (*CPW*, II, 553-54).

From this image of harmony in variety, productive, progressive activity from the multiplicity of individual, differentiated concerns, he moves to stress the clashes, the confrontations so inevitable and necessary and no less productive:

> Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making. Under these fantastic terrors of sect and schism, we wrong the earnest and zealous thirst after knowledge and understanding which God hath stirr'd up in this City. What some lament of, we rather should rejoyce at, should rather praise this pious forwardness among men, to reassume the ill deputed care of their Religon into their own hands again. (*CPW*, II, 554)

And from this stress on the necessities of argument and opinon he moves on to the positive values of separation and division with images of cutting, quarrying, dissection:

> Yet these are the men cry'd out against for schismaticks and sectaries; as if, while the Temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. (*CPW*, II, 555).

What had been harsh and ugly terms of abuse and contempt from the new ruling class - schismatics, sectaries - are now resituated in this beautiful account of the building of the Temple of God. The class implications are unmistakeable. A clue was given in 'we rather should rejoyce at' men reassuming the 'care of their Religion into their own hands again' (*CPW*, II, 554); it is not aristocrats or bishops or businessmen who take things 'into their own hands'; there is a powerful respect here as always in Milton for manual

labourers. This is made explicit in the unambiguously mechanical trades that are specified in the building of the temple; people are shown cutting, squaring, hewing. These are all manual activities; there is 'spiritual architecture' but no architect, only 'builders' (*CPW*, II, 555). The appropriateness of such analogies from physical labour, from working with one's hands, from the employments of the common people, to defend the sects, composed in large part from the working classes, is yet another denial of that elitism so wrongly asserted of Milton. That the manual labour of the lower classes is presented as beautiful makes clear Milton's sympathies. It is not only the radical ideas of the sects that he defends but the social composition of the sects that he glorifies - in marked opposition to the corrupted clergy and university educated elite that he consistently condemns.

Against university acquired learning he covertly insinuated the subversive alternative of divine inspiration. Discussing the injustice liable to be perpetrated on the work of an author now dead by posthumous licensing and censorship Milton remarks 'if there be found in his book one sentence of ventrous edge, utter'd in the height of zeal, and who knows whether it might not be the dictat of a divine Spirit' (534). Zeal and 'the dictat of a divine Spirit' are part of the rhetoric of the radical sects, like the phrase 'the people's birthright' that he also employs in *Areopagitica* (*CPW*, II, 541). When he writes of a 'zealous thirst after knowledge which God had stirr'd up' (*CPW*, II, 554) he is writing from the ideology of the radical sects and schisms. David Petergorsky defined the terms of the ideology in *Left·Wing Democracy in the English Revolution*, (London, 1940, p. 65) :

> Puritanism had insisted that knowledge of God could come only through study and understanding of the Bible. By substituting the written word of the scriptures for the hierarchy as the final authority in religious life, it took the effective direction of religious affairs from the hands of the prelates only to make it the monopoly of a literate class. The reply of the poor - and hence, the illiterate and uneducated - was that not formal learning but an inner spiritual experience and inspiration were the true source of religious knowledge, that contact with God was not the exclusive privilege of a superior class, but could be attained by any man however humble his station.

Milton's ultimate defence of the sects (and hence of the radical, egalitarian and communistic values they espoused) was to turn the tables on the reactionary critics and accuse them, the critics, of being the troublemakers, the divisive influence in the new social experiment:

There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. 'Tis their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppress which is not found in their Syntagma. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissever'd peeces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. (*CPW*, II, 550-1)

This classic dialectical strategy Milton was to use again in *Paradise Lost*. Indeed, it is structurally basic to the poem. Satan, the rebel against God is presented as the archetypal tyrant, the would-be absolutist monarch, with his 'throne of royal state' (II. I) and his 'Monarchal pride' (II. 428). The opprobium attached to rebels, revolutionaries, radicals on earth is a projection by the tyrant and his party of the moral condemnation that properly and justly should attach to the tyrant. The Good Old Cause was not a rebellion but an attempt at restoring a just divine condition, a true Restoration. (See Fredric Jameson, 'Religion and Ideology', in Francis Barker, ed., *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century*, 1981, p. 329). Only five lines into the epic we read 'till one greater man / Restore us, and regain the blissful seat' (I. 5-6). To read the word 'restore' in this epic of 1667, part of the vocabulary of the Stuart return of 1660, is to read something profoundly shocking. It is an utterly unexpected word to find from a revolutionary regicide. It has to be faltered over, our political attention engaged. Emphatically placed at the poem's opening invocation, it is a provocative reassertion of true vocabulary, a refusal of the Stuart regime. And the political intentions of Milton were readily recognized in the seventeenth century. John Toland wrote in his *Life of John Milton* (1698): 'to display the different Effects of Liberty and Tyranny, is the chief design of his *Paradise Lost*.' (In Helen Darbishire (ed), *The Early Lives of Milton*, London, 1965, p. 182.)

Satan's tyranny is demonstrated in the parliament of Hell; the fallen angels all assemble in Pandemonium which, huge as it is, can only accommodate them if they reduce their giant size to 'less than smallest dwarfs;' that is the electorate, and their physical reduction is a mark of the way they are treated, unlike their parliamentary representatives:

But far within
And in their own dimensions like themselves
The great seraphic lords and cherubim
In close recess and secret conclave sat
A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,

Frequent and full. (I. 792-7)

Yet even these thousand unreduced great lords are treated with political contempt. Only four of them ever get to speak in the parliament Satan calls. And what those four say is irrelevant - splendid speech making as the literary critics have always noted, but nonetheless irrelevant; because Satan has already arranged what he wants through Beelzebub; 'Thus Beelzebub Pleaded his devilish counsel, first devised By Satan, and in part proposed.' (II. 378-80). And as soon as Satan has got agreement to his plan to invade earth, he ends the session: 'Thus saying rose The monarch, and prevented all reply'. The whole episode splendidly enacts what Milton had analysed in *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660), his last polemical tract of the revolution,p.ublished on the very eve of the restoration. Under a monarchy, he pointed out, it would always be the case that parliament

> shall be call'd, by the kings good will and utmost endeavour, as seldome as may be; and then for his own ends: for it will soon return to that, let no man hope otherwise, whatever law or provision be made to the contrarie. For it is only the kings right, he will say, to call a Parlament; and this he will do most commonly about his own affairs rather than the kingdom's, as will appear planely as soon as they are call'd. (*CPW*, VII, 375)

According to John Toland (in Helen Darbishire, ed, *The Early Lives of Milton*, p. 180) *Paradise Lost* was nearly banned by the censor because of an image of the sun 'in dim Eclipse' that 'with fear of change Perplexes Monarchs' (I. 594-9). The poem is permeated with political asides, oblique insights. Milton tended to slip his revolutionary sentiments in under the cover of some other problematical matter and this way evaded the censor's attention. In the celebration of wedded love when we first encounter Adam and Eve in book IV, Milton moves from the idyllic, sensuous description of Adam and Eve to a combative argument about sexuality, opposing those who claimed there was no sexual relationship between Adam and Eve before the fall. The counterpoint between the lyrical descriptions - Eve 'in naked beauty more adorn'd / More lovely than Pandora '- and the strident polemic is characteristic of Milton:

> Straight side by side were laid, nor turn'd I ween
> Adam from his fair Spouse, nor Eve
> the Rites Mysterious of connubial Love refus'd

Whatever Hypocrites austerely talk
Of purity and place and innocence
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure. (IV, 741-7)

And then into this already tonally complex passage with its alternation of the erotic and polemic, Milton adds the explosively political:'Haile wedded Love, mysterious law, true source / Of human offspring, sole propriety / In Paradise of all things common else.' (IV, 750-2) Marriage is the 'sole propriety'; everything else is held in common. The assertion of the absence of private ownership in Paradise is unambiguous. Paradise was communist.

The assertions of equality and communal propeny and landholding were expressed most cogently in the revolutionary period by Gerrard Winstanley in the various Digger tracts. And their spirit is echoed elsewhere by Milton. After the execution of King Charles I in 1649, Milton wrote a pamphlet justifying the execution, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. Explaining the origin and development of the institution of monarchy, Milton wrote:

> No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey. (*CPW*, III, 198-9)

The same sentiments are expressed in the same year in the Diggers' manifesto, *The True Levellers' Standard Advanced: or The State of Community opened and Presented to the Sons of Men*:

> In the beginning of time, the great creator Reason made the earth to be a common treasury, to preserve the beasts, birds, fishes and man, the lord that was to govern this creation, for man had domination given to him, over the beasts, birds and fishes; but not one word was spoken in the beginning, that one branch of mankind should rule over another. (Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom and Other Writings*, ed. Christopher Hill, London, 1973, p. 77)

This same stress, that man was given command over the animals, birds and fish but not over other men, is repeated in *Paradise Lost*. Having seen the career of the tyrant Nimrod and the building of the tower of Babel in his vision of the future, Adam declaims

O execrable son so to aspire
Above his Brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurped, from God not given:
He gave us only over Beast, Fish, Fowl
Dominion absolute; that right we hold
By his donation, but Man over men
He made not Lord, such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free. (XII, 63-71)

The sentiments and their expression are clear and unambiguous. Milton is here at the conclusion of *Paradise Lost* reasserting the radical egalitarian sentiments of 1649. From the pre-revolutionary 1630s, through his employment by the Council of State to write official propaganda for the new republic, on into the dark years of the restoration reaction and repression, Milton remained firmly committed to a revolutionary position never ceasing to give expression to his egalitarian, anti-authoritarian, communistic progressive beliefs.

The material of this paper draws on my '*Paradise Lost*: The Parliament of Hell', (a paper at the English Teachers' Association Conference, Morpeth, NSW, 1969) in *The Teaching of English*, 17 (1970), 'Regaining the Radical Milton', (a public lecture in the Australian National University 'Reappraisals' series, 1975),
in Stephen Knight and Michael Wilding ed., *The Radical Reader*, Sydney, 1977, and 'Milton's *A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634*: Politics and Theatre on the Border', (Essays presented to Peter Davison), *Trivium* (University of Wales) 20 (1985); reprinted in Roy Flannagan, ed., *Comus: Contexts, Milton Quarterly*, 21 (1987), discussions developed at length in my *Dragons Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution*, Oxford, 1987. And on 'Milton's *Areopagitica*: Liberty for the Sects,' *Prose Studies*, 9 (1986), reprinted in Thomas N. Corns, ed., *The Literature of Controversy: Polemical Strategy from Milton to*

Junius, London, 1987, and reprinted in my *Revolution and Restoration: Milton, Dryden, Marvell, Butler,* Sydney, 2025.

Fiction as a Political Vehicle

Of the various sorts of evidence available for political, economic and social conditions, fiction is one of the most available and accessible. Fiction can be written or read for a variety of motives and purposes; but out of this variety there has always been the impetus of finding out what this or that environment, life-style, or experience would be like, both historical and contemporary. When Daniel Defoe wrote *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *The Fortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722) both novels purported to be true accounts of shipwreck, prostitution. But though Defoe based Robinson Crusoe on the true life experiences of Alexander Selkirk, the interest of the novel soon spread from the details of survival to the portrayal of the protestant, bourgeois colonizing consciousness. As Ian Watt wrote in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957, Penguin, 1963 p. 65)

> Robinson Crusoe has been very appropriately used by many economic theorists as their illustration of homo economicus. Just as 'the body politic' was the symbol of the communal way of thought typical of previous societies, so 'economic man' symbolized the new outlook of individualism in its economic aspect.

Christopher Caudwell, one of the earliest English Marxist literary critics gives classic expression to this reading of the novel.

> *Robinson Crusoe* is a bourgeois epic, as significant in its way as *Paradise Lost*. Like it, it is an unconscious parable of the bourgeois position, as if Defoe had read Marx. Robinson Crusoe on his island, absolutely alone and completely free, yet calls into existence a bourgeois world. Even the exploited proletariat is there

> in the person of the ignorant, good-natured Man Friday, and as the bourgeois always dreams, there is no overt domination in their relationship - Friday is exploited in the best paternal manner. (*Romance and Realism*, Princeton University Press, 1970, 57-8).

There is, then, immediately a complication. What the fictional work purports to be evidence of, it may or may not be evidence of: it may be evidence of something else equally or more significant. From Ricardo, from Marx's comment in *Capital* (Moscow, 1974, I. 81) to Pierre Macherey in *A Theory of Literary Production* (1966: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), *Robinson Crusoe* has been continually cited and interpreted and reinterpreted for its social and economic significance.

Literature is a transmitter of human consciousness, a record of data, and is as much a source of evidence as history or statistics. But like history and statistics, literature does not offer some pure, value free, objective evidence. Literature in a class society embodies class values, despite attempts of bourgeois critics and academics to claim enduring absolutes of eternal aesthetic value. The modes of production of literature determine what can be said, how information can be conveyed, and determine too the exclusions; the works that are denied publication, or are obliterated from our history. The interpreting activity of the critic and educationalist is no less ideological.

A writer who deals with political and social and economic materials is dealing with materials about which he or she has a political stance. So the evidence the text presents is of the author's ideological presentation of the socio-political materials - not just or separately the sociopolitical materials themselves. The work on establishing the author's ideological stance and class affiliations has rarely been done in the academic subject of English Literature; the conservative orientation of the 'discipline' has preferred to enshrine and espouse 'purely literary values'.

But some work has been done, and any use of literary materials for evidence in studies in political economy or history needs an awareness of this interpretative context. The critical discussions may often seem remote from the original fictional texts. But those texts no longer exist in a hypothetical pre-critical purity. *Robinson Crusoe*, Macherey insists, 'is not simply an adventure story but the instrument of an inquiry, the theme around which an ideology has been progressively established.' (241).

Immediately, then, 'interpretation' intervenes. It is not possible simply to offer a list of texts and say, these are works of literature that illustrate and illuminate socio-political-economic issues. Insofar as works do illustrate and illuminate such issues, they are part of an ongoing ideological debate, and they are enlisted as evidence for now this position, now that position, sometimes explicitly, sometimes covertly. It is not possible

to return to a position of innocence, naivety with literary works; the comments of critics and historians have already reinterpreted and deconstructed the original texts; some of the interpretations are forgotten, others have been accepted in full or part by scholarly, academic and educational institutions and are taken as the actuality; that there was any reconstruction has been forgotten. To rail against this is futile, this is all part of literature; to try to fix the reading, the single, final and immutable reading of a text is absurd, to see the printed book as an object of finality, rather than as part of a communication process. To talk about, to discuss, to interpret, to argue about a literary work is part of the experience of the literary work. Literature is part of a consciousness battle -not only in what the writer writes, and the sources and influences that determine his writing, but in the uses and interpretations made of his writing by readers, critics, commentators. The interpretations themselves are part of the literary evidence. They mark ideological shifts. The reams of disinformation are of the nature of the battle. The critical disputes may seem as remote and absurd as the disputes Jonathan Swift records in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) about whether high or low heels should be worn or whether eggs should be broken at the big or the little end; but these absurdities, it is important to realize, were Swift's rewriting of the very real political, social and economic conflicts of the English Revolution; the reduction of them to trivia was the ideology of the Augustan ruling elite, attempting to depoliticize the events of recent history, to discredit sectarian, radical commitment.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SELF-CONSCIOUS TRADITION

'The liberal superstition that in political and social questions there is such a thing as pure, unmanipulated truth seems to enjoy remarkable currency among the socialist left,' Hans Magnus Enzensberger writes in 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media' (*Raids and Reconstructions: Essays in Politics, Crime and Culture*, Pluto, London, 1976, 26). But once the existence of manipulation is recognized, it is possible to proceed to use the literary materials as evidence. The novelist most admired by Marx and Engels was Honoré Balzac (Marx and Engels, *On Literature and Art*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976). And Balzac's *Lost Illusions* (1837-43; Penguin 1971) is an essential fictional study of nineteenth-century literary production - encompassing the writer, publisher, critic, lobbyist, printer, paper-maker, patron, financier and police, analysing the material base of bourgeois art, exploring the conspiracies and manipulations, involving 'every feature of the capitalization of literature' as George Lukàcs wrote in his brilliant essay on the novel in *Studies in European Realism* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1964). 'Thus the ultimate integrating principle of this novel is the social process itself and its real subject is the advance and victory of capitalism. Lucien's personal catastrophe is the typical

fate of the poet and of true poetic talent in the world of fully developed capitalism.' (ibid, 53) To read *Lost Illusions* is part of a beginning to use literary evidence; it examines what literature is in the society of finance capitalism, it demystifies the concept of literature as pure 'art', understanding it as part of commodity production and of consciousness manipulation and control. Fifty years later Guy de Maupassant in *Bel Ami* (1885; Penguin 1975) examined the world of metropolitan journalism, of the newspaper established to aid its owner's financial speculations, of the political manipulations and lies, of the co-option of the literati. And Jack London's autobiographical novel *Martin Eden* (1909; Penguin 1979). based on his working class childhood and early manhood in San Francisco and his encounters with bourgeois ideology and the literary machine, offers an American extension of these materials. These novels about the literary process in all its social and economic ramifications are basic to any use of literature as social evidence. The economic and social determinants of contemporary literary production are examined in two recent studies, Richard Kostelanetz's *The End of Intelligent Writing* (Sheed and Ward, N.Y., 1974; reissued as *Literary Politics in America*) and J.A. Sutherland's English oriented study, *Fiction and the Fiction Industry* (Athlone Press, 1978).

There are two useful surveys of the English novel written from a progressive socio-historical perspective, Arnold Kettle's *An Introduction to the English Novel* (Hutchinson University Library, 1951) and Raymond Williams' *The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence* (Chatto & Windus, 1970; Paladin, 1974). But the social background of English writers has not been much examined. Raymond Williams devotes a chapter of *The Long Revolution* (Chatto & Windus, 1961; Penguin 1965) to 'the social history of English writers.' Working class writers are proportionately few, and evidence of working class conditions presented in literature is mediated through generally bourgeois perceptions.

THE NATURALIST / REALIST TRADITION

Naturalism, the mode developed by Emile Zola and the writers associated with him in late nineteenth-century France was a mode of supposedly objective scientific observation of sociological and economic conditions; its orientation, both in the background and life styles of its practitioners and in its intended readership, was middle class. *Germinal* (1885) dealt with the appalling conditions of the miners, *La Terre* (1887) with the peasantry.

In England the classic, authentic, less external representation of working class life is found in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (19l3), an autobiographical account of life in the mining district of the north-east Midlands. His *The Rainbow* (1915) deals with the alienations of English middle-class life - gentlemen farmers,

mine managers, teachers, army officers; its sequel *Women in Love* (1921) deals with the alienation of the upper-middle class intelligentsia, Bloomsbury and the mine-owners. *Kangaroo* (1923) has the DHL-based protagonist considering the rival claims in Australia of socialist and fascist ideologies. Alan Sillitoe is the foremost English recorder of working class life in the mid twentieth-century; *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), his first novel, dealt with working class factory life, and the stories in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1959) further explored this milieu from the authentic basis of lived experience. His *Key to the Door* (1961) offers a conspectus of English working class life from the depression through to the UK anti-communist war in Malaya in the 1950s.

Both Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* (Chatto & Windus 1973; Paladin 1975) and Jack Lindsay in *Decay and Renewal* (Wild & Woolley/Lawrence & Wishart, 1976) draw attention to a comparatively forgotten writer. Lewis Grassic Gibbon, whose trilogy *A Scots Quair* (written 1932-4) 'stands out clearly as one of the few crests of achievement in the English novel of the '30s. Its noble picture of the destruction of a peasantry gains with the years' (Lindsay 167). Another neglected work of the '30s, WaIter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* (1933) gives a first hand account of the depression in Manchester and Salford. And perhaps the most famous of all English novels of working class life is Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (1914; Panther 1965). Nigel Gray has written a useful survey of the 1950s and '60s material in *The Silent Majority: A Study of the Working Class in Post-War British Fiction* (1973).

Realism and naturalism are the modes most favoured by historians for evidence. But realism and naturalism are only two of the available modes, and are no less arbitrary, formalized and 'unreal' than other modes. I have argued in *Political Fictions* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) that 'a dissatisfaction with realism can be seen throughout the fictional productions of this century. *News from Nowhere, The Iron Heel, We, Brave New World, Animal Farm,* and *Nineteen Eighty-four* constitute far more than a peripheral departure from a central 'realism'. The search in political fiction, as in all fiction, is for the appropriate, expressive form. From Morris's analysis of realism in *News from Nowhere* to Brecht's running argument with Lukàcs, the limited nature of realism has been demonstrated. 'Realism' is a particular formalism - partial, historically based, class-determined. Its name claims a totality and finality that as a form it does not possess. It is but one mode among many, and no longer the mode which those progressive writers concerned with political and social issues would choose.'

IMAGINARY WORLDS

Portrayals of society in its political, social and economic aspects, it needs to be stressed, are not restricted to realism or naturalism. Utopias, anti-utopias, science-fiction fantasies, modes more experimental than the dominant realism of the late nineteenth and twentieth century, have been particularly attractive to writers of a political, social vision. The future projections offered extensions of contemporary trends in industrial capitalism - as in the work of H.G. Wells; and they offered the negation of contemporary conditions in an attempt to indicate what a communist or socialist society could be like - as in the work of Bellamy or Morris. Importantly, these projected futures offer a critique of contemporary conditions; they are all fictions written in response to perceived crises in capitalism.

Bellamy and Morris have a further interest in that their works are evidence for the development and transmission of a radical consciousness. Their works were explicit and immensely popular propaganda for the labour movement; they were issued in cheap and accessible editions that were circulated throughout the movement and influenced generations of trade unionists, socialists and Marxists, with their concrete visions of a possible society to strive towards. Their works are not only accounts of future societies created in negation of existing conditions, but they were also political instruments that determined the later development of radical thought. They are not only 'evidence' but they were also active interventions.

Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* 2000 - 1887 (1887) describes Boston, Mass., in the year 2000 A.D. under highly efficient industrialized state socialism. Bellamy's argument was that the monopolistic movement of late nineteenth-century capitalism would result in an ultimate systematization into one total state monopoly, capitalism handing over 'absolutely without violence.' As a model for how a socialist society could operate with a basis of co-operation instead of competition, and as an argument for non-violent change, *Looking Backward* was an immensely influential book on the union and labour movements in the USA, UK and Australia - where it was serialized in the Brisbane *Worker* under William Lane's editorship from its first issue in March 1890. Bellamy wrote a sequel, continuing the narrative and adding further social detail, called *Equality*.

William Morris reviewed *Looking Backward* in *The Commonweal*, the paper of the Socialist League, 22 June, 1889. Bellamy's

> temperament may be called the unmixed modern one, unhistorical and unartistic, and it makes its owner (if a socialist) perfectly satisfied with modern civilisation, if only the injustices, miseries and waste of class society could. be got rid of; which half change seems possible to him. The only ideal of life which such a man can see is that of the industrious professional middle-class man of today, purified from the crime of

their complicity with the monopolist class, and. become independent instead of being as they are now, parasitical.

The passage is quoted in A.L. Morton's 'Utopia Yesterday and Today' in his *The Matter of Britain* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1966). Morton has written a valuable historical survey, *The English Utopia* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1952; Seven Seas, 1968) ranging from medieval to modern times. He has also edited *William Morris's Political Writings* (Lawrence & Wishart / Seven Seas, 1973), a valuable collection of Morris's lectures on society, Marxism and art, and he has edited *Three Works by William Morris* (Seven Seas, 1968) which reprints *The Pilgrims of Hope* (1886), *A Dream of John Ball* (1887) and *News from Nowhere* (1890).

Morris wrote *News from Nowhere* in recoil from Bellamy's future vision. Morris found Bellamy's regimented 'machine life' hideous, argued in his review that 'variety of life' was as much an aim of true communism as equality of condition, and wrote his alternative projection of communist England at a stage when the state has withered away and the basically agricultural society is self-managed by local groups. After the revolution, machines were abandoned on a large scale because they had been designed for commodity production rather than for use of creativity. Morris projects a society in which production for production's sake will have stopped. Jack Lindsay in *William Morris: His Life and Works* (Constable, 1975) explores Morris's social thinking:

> If Marx was right, a genuinely new society can be born only when commodity-production ends, and with it division of labour, money, market-systems, and alienation in all its many shapes and forms above all the alienation from nature. Morris is one of the extremely few thinkers who have tried to realise at all fully what such a situation implies. It certainly implies the end of all systems of production for production's sake (which repose finally on the need for capital to renew and multiply itself); it implies a situation where all poverty has indeed been abolished, but above all where men are able to understand just what they do need in order to live a truly satisfactory life as the good animals of an accepted earth. In the world where commodity production has ended, we have neither maximum production nor zero-growth; we have instead a society where people, freed from fear, are able to realise how little they need in order to achieve fulfilment and happiness. These problems are now beginning to come up for us all, not as the philosophical problems they were from Marx and Morris, but as problems of necessity in a world where men seek to make an infinite use of finite sources of energy and productive materials.

Other important studies of Morris include E.P. Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955; 2nd edition, Merlin, London, 1977), which is discussed in Perry Anderson's *Arguments Within English Marxism* (Verso, London, 1980), and Paul Meier's *William Morris; The Marxist Dreamer* (1972; Harvester/Humanities Press, 1978).

In contradistinction to *Looking Backward*, *News from Nowhere* stresses that the change only came about through violent Revolution, projected from the Bloody Sunday incident (13 May 1886) when police and soldiers attacked a peaceful demonstration in Trafalgar Square, killing three demonstrators and wounding 200 more. The demonstration had been in protest of the killing of six demonstrators when police fired on a strike demonstration in Chicago.

The Chicago episode resonates through Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1907); the novel ends with an abortive rising, stirred by agent provocateurs, of a Chicago commune, and its subsequent massacre in a projected future 1932. London postulated that the monopolies would fight to the end to resist socialism, and would institute an iron heel of repression for a further four centuries:

> Out of the decay of self-seeking capitalism, it was held, would arise that flower of the ages, the Brotherhood of Man. Instead of which, appalling alike to us who look back and to those that lived at the time, capitalism, rotten-ripe, sent forth that monstrous offshoot, the Oligarchy.
> Too late did the socialist movement of the early twentieth century divine the coming of the Oligarchy. Even as it was divined, the Oligarchy was there - a fact established in blood, a stupendous and awful reality. Nor even then, as the Everhard Manuscript well shows, was any permanence attributed to the Iron Heel.

The novel's socialist hero Ernest Everhard offers a Marxist analysis of nineteenth and twentieth-century capitalism in the USA The narrative - a manuscript written by his wife - describes the socialists' political campaign, their harrassment, framing, gaoling and subsequent underground war against the plutocracy up till 1932. The 'manuscript' is annotated from the perspective of the 26th century when capitalism having at last collapsed of its own contradictions has been succeeded by the Brotherhood of Man, a super-efficient state socialist society.

London is generally remembered for his animal stories and tales of adventure in the Yukon and Pacific. *The Iron Heel*, unavailable for years, has been reissued by Journeyman Press, London (1974) and they have also reissued his reportage on English working class life in the East End of London, *The People of the Abyss* (1903; introduction by Jack Lindsay, 1977) and *Revolution: Stories and Essays* selected by Robert Barltrop (1979).

Barltrop has written a life, *Jack London: The Man, the Writer, the Rebel* (Pluto, 1976) which covers the materials from a socialist perspective but concedes too much to the bourgeois literary critiques of London's writings.

London's time travel novel *The Star Rover* (1915; also known as *The Jacket*) and his novel of prehistoric man, *Before Adam* (1906) are informed with a Marxist-Darwinian social vision. Philip Foner has a useful selection of London's work together with a lengthy introduction, *Jack London: American Rebel* (1947; Citadel, N.Y., 1964). Foner is also author of *Mark Twain Social Critic* (1958; International, N.Y., 1972).

IMAGINARY WORLDS: PROJECTION AND ANTI-UTOPIAS.

Within the genre of future projections, the anti-utopias or dystopias of H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell are the best known. These are the writers whose work is on the educational syallabuses. Wells wrote a number of alternative scenarios for the development of society on the lines of monopoly capitalism and class struggle - notably *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Sleeper Wakes* (1899). *In The Days of the Comet* (1906) offers a naturalistic account of working and lower-middle class life (the subject of Wells' naturalistic fictions in *Kipps* (1905), *Ann Veronica* (1909), and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910) in the days prior to an apocalyptic world war, and a future projection of a just society beyond it. Christopher Caudwell places Wells' class position and perspective in 'H.G. Wells: A Study in Utopianism' in his *Studies in a Dying Culture* (1938).

Most literature departments and many history and political science departments that use literary materials represent Aldous Huxley and George Orwell on their courses or reading lists. But both these writers, though often imagined to have liberal or even radical leanings, represent the ruling-class response of one-time imperial England.

Only someone who has never been a worker can portray 'workers' as 'workers' - as externally and distantly viewed indistinguishable stereotypes. The patrician perspective of Orwell and Huxley is embodied in the way they present societies composed of anonymous workers - the proles in *Nineteen Eighty-four*, the deltas in *Brave New World*. People only look that way when envisioned from a different, alien class perspective. It comes from assuming that people who do hard and menial tasks can be characterised by those tasks and can be assumed to have no other qualities, no individuality; both Huxley and Orwell create futures in which the proles, the bred workforce, are seen and treated as animals or automata. This tells us something about the

thinking of the mid-century English ruling-class literati. In both novels the thinking, questioning, protagonist comes from a class other than the workforce. These are bourgeois myths for a bourgeois readership.

Brave New World (1932) projects a totalitarian system of control based on commodity production and consumption and biological conditioning, test-tube babies bred as workers, technocrats etc; the society is maintained by drug control - soma - and breeding, so there is no need for the Orwellian violence. As a critique of free-enterprise capitalism and as an indication of scientific methods of control, *Brave New World* had its impact. *Island* (1962) represents Huxley's later thoughts on the topic, here postulating a remote Pacific island community looking for a middle way between multinational exploitation and communism - psychedelic mushrooms now a positive in the society rather than the negative soma of *Brave New World*. (laughing gas, N20, seems to have been the consciousness changing force in Wells' *In the Days of the Comet*).

Nineteen Eighty-four (l949) follows - and indeed helped also to create more forcefully - the Cold War line of its period. It projects a future England in which fascist totalitarianism and socialist totalitarianism are presented as identical; the ideology of the ruling Party, Big Brother's Party, is 'Ingsoc.' Orwell always denied he meant English socialism. But that was the meaning that was read and promoted. The novel projects an England of perpetual commodity shortages, a society separated into Inner Party, Party members, and proles. The 1930s demoralized defeated working class, the London Blitz, and the austerity of post World War II England are here frozen into a permanent future condition. The theory of the society is expressed in excerpts from the imaginary book, Goldstein's *Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*:

> The primary aim of modern warfare (in accordance with the principles of doublethink, this aim is simultaneously recognized and not recognized by the directing brains of the Inner Party) is to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living. Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, the problem of what to do with the surplus of consumption goods has been latent in industrial society. At present, when few human beings even have enough to eat this problem is obviously not urgent, and it might not have become so, even if no artificial processes of destruction had been at work. The world of today is a bare, hungry, dilapidated place compared with the world that existed before 1914, and still more so if compared with the imaginary future to which the people of that period looked forward.
> Power now lies in the hands of the new class of bureaucrats, whose imperative is not money or culture or justice or anything at all but power. The proles are presented as brutalized with alcohol, uneducated, inert.

It is still possible to interpret Orwell's intention in this positively as, for instance, Paul O'Flinn does in *Them and Us in Literature* (Pluto, 1975):

> Orwell knew that the future was not inevitably socialist as Fabians used to believe. He knew with Engels that there's a choice - socialism or barbarism. At a time when the working class seemed stalled and revolutionary organisations didn't exist barbarism seemed likeliest, so he wrote to warn. It's still a valid warning. Either we build the socialism that Orwell believed in or they build the 1984 that Orwell was afraid of. (20)

But the portrayal of the proletariat has its other implications, as Raymond Williams points out in his excellent study *Orwell* (Fontana, 1971).

> He projects an enormous apathy on all the oppressed: a created mood, if ever there was one. Eighty-five per cent of the population are seen as an apathetic mass, and proles, as a description of them, seems more than Party jargon. The Party sees them as 'natural inferiors ... like animals', but how does Orwell see them? As a shouting, stupid crowd in the streets; drinking and gambling; 'like the ant, which can see small objects but not large ones'; 'people who have never learned to think.' It is the world of working people, before 1914, as seen by the prep-school boy' (78).

And Williams continues. 'It needs to be said, however bitterly, that if the tyranny of 1984 ever finally comes, one of the major elements of the ideological preparation will have been just this way of seeing "the masses"'. (79) Orwell's fiction was an active intervention in the battle of consciousness. 'By viewing the struggle as one between only a few people over the heads of an apathetic mass, Orwell created the conditions for defeat and despair.' (79).

Much of Orwell's 'leftism' now looks like a pseudo-leftism, proclaiming a left-progressive orientation, yet in detail after serving the interests of reaction. His *Burmese Days* (1934) describes his early life as an Imperial policeman; he resigned, but later spent the World War II years broadcasting imperial propaganda to India. His account of working class conditions, *Down and Out in London and Paris* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) are inevitably imbued with this imperialist Etonian perspective. *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) attacked the communists in the Spanish Civil War from an 'anarchist' line. *Animal Farm* (1945) was an anti-communist, anti-Soviet Union fable. Both Huxley and Orwell drew heavily on Eugene Zamyatin's novel *We*

(1925), which in its turn drew on Wells and London. Set in the 26th century it projects not London's Brotherhood of Man but an oppressive, controlled, mathematically precise and organised future society, criticized from a romantic, anarchic standpoint; the first of the satires on the planned society of the Soviet Union.

FASCISM, ALIENATION AND IMPERIALISM

Evidence for social, political and economic conditions can be drawn not only from novels of working-class life or from radical future projections. These are basic sources since the political and economic data are part of their thematic concerns. Similarly a politically conscious conservative writer will present accessible political and economic evidence. Hence Marx's admiration for Balzac. From Morris, London, Bellamy to Wells, Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell is a whole spectrum of political ideology. Fredric Jameson's study of Wyndham Lewis, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (University of California Press, 1979)offers some valuable social insights into Lewis's proto-fascism. The novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, beginning with *Journey to the End of The Night* (l932; New Directions 1960) and *Death on the Installment Plan* (1936: New Directions 1971) are full of socio-economic observation, carrying through to his account of the collapsing Third Reich, seen from within, in later novels like *North* (1960; Bodley Head, 1973):

> The real iron curtain is between the rich and the down-and-outers ... between people of equal fortune ideas don't count ... when you take a good look, your opulent Nazi, an inhabitant of the Kremlin, directors of Gnome et Rhone ... they exchange wives, traipse around the same golf courses, buy and sell the same helicopters, and open the hunt together ...

In the USA the inheritor of much of the Céline tradition is William Burroughs whose *Junkie* (1953; Penguin 1977) is an acute exploration of the social role of heroin - its economic and its control functions; Burroughs' later fantasy works continue this exploration of alienation and control - *The Naked Lunch* (1959; Corgi 1968), *The Soft Machine* (1961; Calder & Boyars, 1968) and *Nova Express* (1964; Panther 1968).

Imperialism and colonialism, though basic to England's economy, were displaced to a peripheral role in English literary production. The pantheon of accepted 'literary' texts of Dickens and George Eliot, Thackery, Meredith, Hardy and James do not deal directly with the experience. It was left to the adventure story writers like Rider Haggard and particularly to the boy's adventure stories of G.A. Henty. But Rudyard Kipling

brought up in India, offers the major literary record of the Indian imperial episode. And Joseph Conrad, a Pole who took on English nationality, wrote in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) the most powerful account of imperialist exploitation in the late nineteenth century Congo; though a conservative writer - *Nostromo* (1902) offers a conservative overview of political and economic revolutionary change in South America - *Heart of Darkness* provides in its material evidence as radical a critique of imperialism as Mark Twain's equally important attack on Belgian colonial policy in *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905).

Jonah Raskin's *The Mythology of Imperialism* (Random House, 1971; Delta 1973) is an important account of the writings of Joyce Cary, Conrad, E.M. Forster, Kipling and D.H. Lawrence in this area. Lucien Goldmann's *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1964; Tavistock, 1975) offers a structural study of the novels of Andre Malraux dealing with western imperialism and revolutionary change in China.

AN AUSTRALIAN TRADITION

Australian literature as an academic subject has generally followed the depoliticized, desocialized, close-reading approach of English studies. The historian Russell Ward used the folk ballads as the basis for tracing the historical origins and development of *The Australian Legend* (Oxford U.P., 1958) and he has edited an anthology, The *Penguin Book of Australian Ballads* (1964). Humphrey McQueen's *A New Britannia: an argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism* (Penguin, 1970) which took issue with Ward, used the literary figures Bernard O'Dowd, A.H. Adams, Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson, Christopher Brennan, C.J. Dennis and William Lane as basic to his revisionist argument.

Lane's novel set at the time of the maritime and shearers' strikes in the early 1890s, *The Workingman's Paradise* (1892; Sydney University Press, 1980) is a vivid, first-hand account of the beginnings of the labour movement and the women's movement in Australia. The story of the radicalization of a Queensland shearer, it offers some of the earliest and most memorable pictures of Sydney's slums, the radical speakers in the Domain, the unemployed and homeless sleeping out, and Paddy's market. The street market was a central episode in novels of working class life, as P.J. Keating shows in *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971). He traces the set piece back to Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1850), a novel Lane excerpted in *The Worker* and included in *The Worker* book exchange - a library of socialist literature made available to Australian unionists in the early 1890s. The literary titles comprised *Looking*

Backward, Kingsley's *Alton Locke* and *Yeast* (1851), Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* (1883) George Bernard Shaw's *An Unsocial Socialist* (1883) and Ignatius Donnelly's *Caesar's Column* (1889).

Amongst those affected by Lane's radical propagandizing was Henry Lawson. Hilton Barton argues for a major influence in 'Lawson, Lane and "Mateship"' (*Communist Review*, 244, April 1962). Contemporary critical orthodoxy has been for the new left to deny the radicalism of Lane and Lawson, and to argue Lawson was so racist and nationalist as to be fascist; while the conservatives have dropped Lawson's explicitly social and political work from notice. Not only is much never anthologized, but what does appear follows the conventional enough critical practice of using the later, revised texts of a story or poem, rather than the text of first publication. Much of Lawson's work was written for radical and union papers - including Lane's *Worker* - and the texts were altered when collected in later editions. Lawson may have wanted to remove what became a dated topicality, or may have wanted to tone down his radicalism in the climate of political repression that followed the defeat of the 1890's strikes; or it may be that some publishers' editor made the emendations, changing lines, cutting stanzas. The reader looking at the text for its socio-economic-political meanings would need to know the original published version; indeed, to be aware of both texts to see the political and cultural changes. Colin Roderick's edition of the poetry (Angus and Robertson, 3 vols. 1967-9) notes the originals as variants, so the original readings are accessible - but the anthologies are generally obscure on these matters. In parallel with this textual depoliticization, there has also been a direction of attention away from the socio-political, indeed the establishment of a polarization between the political (which meant radical) and the aesthetic. G.A. Wilkes' essay 'The Eighteen Nineties' (in Grahame Johnston ed., *Australian Literary Criticism*, Oxford U.P., 1962) gives classic expression to this position which finds the strength of Lawson and Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* (1903) not in their political, radically committed aspects but in what 'transcends' their age and environment. John Docker has looked at some of the socio-political implications of academic orthodoxies on the 1890s in two pieces in *New Literature Review*, 6 - 'University Teaching of Australian Literature' and 'The Politics of Criticism: Leon Cantrell and the Gloom Thesis', in part provoked by Cantrell's useful anthology *The 1890s* (University of Queensland Press, 1977).

Both the radicals and the nationalists claimed Lawson and Furphy as the originators of their Australian tradition, founders of the realist tradition in Australian fiction. Jean Devanney, Katherine Susannah Prichard and Vance Palmer were seen as the inheritors, and Jack Lindsay's essays on Prichard, Palmer, Barbara Baynton, Alan Marshall and Frank Hardy in *Decay and Renewal* offer a good introduction to the social realist line of Australian writing. David Walker has offered a more critical account of the limitations of the social

democratic assumptions of Palmer, Louis Esson and Furnley Maurice in *Dream and Disillusion* (A.N.U. press, 1976).

Another novel regularly cited for its recording of social conditions in lower class Sydney is Louis Stone's *Jonah* (1911), and Christina Stead's *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* (1934) is a powerful account of poverty and politics in the first quarter of the century. Stead's *For Love Alone* (1944) also offers valuable social materials on 1920s Sydney, *House of All Nations* (1938) deals with Parisian banking in the 1930s, and *Cotter's England* (1967) deals with English working class life and politics in the 1950s.

There has been a growing attempt to examine the ideological formations of Australian cultural positions in John Docker's *Australian Cultural Elites* (Angus & Robertson, 1974), Tim Rowse's *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Kibble, 1978) and Ian Reid's *Fiction and the Great Depression in Australia and New Zealand* (Arnold, 1979). Jack Beasley's *Red Letter Days* (Australasian Book Society, 1979) offers an inside account of the ABS and the realist writers movements in relation to Alan Marshall, Frank Hardy, Judah Waten, Mary Gilmore, Les Haylen and Gavin Casey. Beasley's monograph *Socialism and the Novel: a Study of Australian Literature* (1957) is a pioneering work with a useful checklist of 'Australian Literature of Significance.'

Finally, it is important to point out, 'high art' literature is not the only or necessarily the best source of literary evidence for political, social or economic materials. Stephen Knight's *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (Macmillan, 1980) discusses Edgar Allan Poe, Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, Agatha Christie, Raymond Chandler and Ed McBain, exploring the socio-political meaning of their chosen forms. And Frank Kofsky's *Lenny Bruce: the Comedian as Social Critic and Secular Moralist* (Monad/ Pathfinder, 1974) offers a socio-political reading of the great satirist, whose work has been edited by John Cohen in *The Essential Lenny Bruce* (Panther, 1975).

Happy reading.

(*Journal of Australian Political Economy*, 10, 1981)

APPENDIX

The following reviews are offered as supplementary discussions of critical studies relevant to 'Fiction as a Political Vehicle.'

Guide to Marxist Literary Criticism, edited by Chris Bullock and David Peck, Brighton: Harvester Press. 1981.

Without doubt this guide fulfils its compilers' intention of providing 'a practical handbook for students and teachers', though its price will put it beyond the reach of most students and confine it to institutional libraries. But it will provide an invaluable finding aid to those libraries, being a praiseworthy attempt to provide a compact checklist to a large and far-reaching field. To dwell on its limitations in this review is to suggest those improvements that could be made in the second edition the editors look forward to, and not to undercut the achievement of the Guide itself. The title Guide to Marxist Literary Criticism is misleading. As the editors explain in their 'Principles of Selection', 'since this is a bibliography of works available in English on English, Canadian, and U.S. literatures, works that are not yet translated from other languages, or works in English on subjects outside these areas (such as Soviet or English Marxist analysis of Russian literature) are not listed'. The boundaries of its concern - not even commonwealth or world literature in English, let alone European or Asian or anything other than English and North American literature, is included - might more clearly have been proclaimed. Generally, however, the work of the major European Marxist critics is represented - Lukács, Goldmann, Benjamin, Macherey, Brecht, Gramsci, Sartre all appear, even when they deal with non-English subjects. Their listing can seem somewhat arbitrary, however: Lukács's works on literature which, though focused on European or Soviet writers, also dealt with English writers or general themes, are included, but the volumes specifically on Thomas Mann and Solzhenitsyn are omitted. Inevitably, arbitrary decisions are made but a more inclusive approach here would have been more useful. The Guide as it stands is primarily a North American book, first published by Indiana University Press. It is excellent that Harvester have made an English edition available, but unfortunate that they have not re-edited it for the English market. The publishing information is oriented basically, though not exclusively, on the North American book trade and English editions are not consistently listed. And so Caudwell, E. P. Thompson, Eagleton, and Caute, for instance, are listed under their New York publishers and the original English editions are omitted; European and U.S. critics similarly are frequently cited only in New York editions. Raymond Williams is generally listed under English imprints, but none of the Penguin, Paladin, or Fontana editions of his works is listed. Indeed, English paperback editions fare badly and the entries need considerably supplementing in this area. The Guide is in fifteen sections: Bibliographical Tools; General Collections; Journals; Marxist Criticism - General; Drama; Fiction; Poetry; British; U.S.; English-Canadian; Individual Authors; Teaching English; Language, Linguistics, and Literacy; Literature and Society; Mass Culture. It has an index to critics who

have three separate citations - those with fewer are omitted - and a sketchy index of thematic topics. The 'Individual Authors' section will be the most used in the usual teaching situation, though it contains only fifty-six pages. It is cross-indexed with the more general sections, though it often misses items listed in the Guide. Williams's *Culture and Society* and Kettle's *Introduction to the English Novel* are not noted under Lawrence; Macherey's *A Theory of Literary Production* is not listed under Defoe. Such examples could be multiplied. Some classics of Marxist criticism - such as William Morris's review of *Looking Backward* - are missing. The Guide does not consistently cite editions of works that have prefaces by Marxist commentators: A.L. Morton's introductions to William Morris's *Three Works* and *Political Writings,* for instance, are missed and those two volumes are nowhere mentioned, important as they are; Jack Lindsay and Robert Barltrop's recent introductions to the Journeyman Press reprints of Jack London's *People of the Abyss* and *Revolution* are similarly missed; and the comments by Lenin and Trotsky on London are nowhere recorded. Jack Lindsay's *After the Thirties: The Novel in Britain and its Future* (1956), *A Short History of Culture* (1939, revised 1962), and *Meetings with Poets* (1968), dealing with Dylan Thomas and Edith Sitwell amongst others, are omitted. And there seems to have been little or no attempt to work through such journals as *Left Review*, *New Masses*, *Marxist Quarterly*, or *Modern Quarterly* to indicate the wealth of material buried there in article form. *Arena* and *Our Time* are not even listed. The Guide does not claim to be a comprehensive bibliography and does not generally attempt to indicate where a chapter or excerpt of a listed work originally appeared in a journal or where it was later anthologized. For practical use, such appeared in a journal or where it was later anthologized. For practical use, such multiple listing would have been invaluable. Too often the one listed book will be borrowed or missing from the library, while the relevant chapter could be found in a journal or critical anthology. The editors also declare: 'We have not included Marxist history, economics, sociology or philosophy; although such work is essential to an understanding of Marxism and Marxist criticism, we have necessarily limited ourselves in this Guide to the categories of literature and culture.' Without debating whether a Marxist study of literature can be made in isolation from history, economics, sociology, or philosophy, the practical consequences of this procedure can be seen in the omission of, for instance, Christopher Hill's *Intellectual Origins ofthe English Revolution*, with its studies of Ralegh and Bacon, his *World Turned Upside Down*, with its appendix on Bunyan and Milton, and his edition of Winstanley. Ralegh and Winstanley are not represented in the 'Individual Authors' section of the Guide. These various exclusions and omissions are unfortunate; but the compilers have also included useful material that might have been excluded had a narrower or more purist approach been followed. They have listed various non-Marxist items (marked NM) that they deem to have

a part in or relevance to Marxist literary debate. And the entire nine-page section 'Literature and Society; the Sociology Literature' is predominantly non-Marxist.. It is a worthwhile policy of inclusiveness, for it allows critical studies of a leftist or progressive orientation, and explorations of literary sociology basic to Marxist critical studies, to be represented.
(*Modern Language Review*, 78, 1983)

Raymond Williams, by J. P. Ward. (Writers of Wales) Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of The Welsh Arts Council, 1981).

Over the last quarter of a century, Raymond Williams has emerged as the best known of English left-wing literary and cultural commentators. Mr Ward ranges over most of his work in this brief monograph. He sees 'the level reasonableness of the writing, the suggestion that wholeness and unity were available in a class divided society' as one of the 'main reasons' for the 'huge success and appeal' of *Culture and Society*; he rejects the charges of sociologizing levelled against *The Long Revolution* and characterizes its manner as 'humanistic: a matter of gentle persuasion, and of quietly phrased appeals to moderation of attitude, and to reason'; he admires the 'typical coolness and balance' of the writing on Brecht; he argues that 'two things always prevented any allegiance of Williams to Marxism', his populism, and his rejection of the primacy of the economic base; he remarks of *Marxism and Literature* and *Keywords* that 'there is a notable absence of overtly political writing in these two works (although the quiet inferences are usually there), and Williams seems to have reached something from which he was admittedly perhaps never faraway all along; namely, the view that a whole culture's structure of feeling is mainly an active network of language abstractions'. This monograph, the first to be devoted to Williams's work, further privileges him as the foremost individualist practitioner in an area that might have been expected to be more orientated to co-operative and collaborative production. But though Mr Ward finds many aspects of Williams's work problematic, at no point does he examine why and how one single radical figure should be accorded such pre-eminence, nor does he question the consequences of such privileging. His note is one of celebration of those individualist aspects: 'By 1977 his London publishers alone had sold three-quarters of a million copies of his books.' And though he heavily stresses Williams's ambiguity and elusiveness, he nowhere speculates whether a less ambiguously presented position could have achieved such acceptance. In his interviews with *New Left Review, Politics and Letters* (New Left Books, London, 1979), Williams valuably situated his earlier work

in his developing relationship with Leavis and the Scrutiny school which until the 1960s had seemed the progressive mode in English studies in Britain, a mark of the effectiveness of Cold-War suppressions; and he candidly indicated the way in which perceived social possibilities and explicit requirements from publishers determined the shape and nature of the published volumes. The words did not spring fully and finally shaped from the writer's head on to the printed page; and properly to foreground the many intervening factors is to see the pressures operating against the establishing of a radical vision in English cultural production. Mr Ward's emphasis, however, is less on Williams's work situated in its social and cultural context (the developed model ofWilliams's own criticism) than a survey of the individual texts. While stressing 'the emphatically radical and socialist commitment' of Williams's work, he argues that 'despite the loyal and indeed passionate commitment to this position, it has never been clear exactly where, within it, Raymond Williams has stood'. At times Mr Ward offers an evolutionary model, of'changing emphasis from the liberal to the Marxist tradition'; at others a more enduring model of ambiguity: 'He is candid, as we have said; at another level elusive, even evasive.' And it is this that is stressed. 'The reader is often left with a sense of having been eluded, even while he also has the feeling of having been taken across so much ground.' At various points Mr Ward offers interpretations of this ambiguity. Early in the monograph he offers a parallel with Williams's work situation: 'It must be therefore pointed out that this vociferous critic of the British establishment and all its cultural manifestations has spent his entire academic career in our two senior and ancient universities, a matter on which, it seems, he has been on the whole rather silent. It is also true, however, that his work at Oxford was largely with non-resident, mature, and often working-class students.' The ambiguity has entered Mr Ward's own method. 'This elusiveness, this ambivalence, can reasonably be seen as the result of the attempt at such inclusiveness on so panoramic a topic as culture itself.' The *New Left Review* interviewers probed what were perceived as ambiguities and contradictions in Williams's position, and their probing generally resulted in valuable cultural and social situating. But Mr Ward's stress on the ambiguity becomes as much an indication of the ambiguity of his own response to Williams's work as an account of the work itself; he writes of the novels that 'some readers would find these books dull', characterizing their writing as 'the almost oppressive close-up observation of detail', 'an almost overpoweringly accurate sense of the interiors of terraced houses'. They hardly emerge as exciting from this critical account. And the final attempt at examining Williams's Welshness leaves a similar ambiguity: 'It may finally be asked - as some have - whether Williams is, if not cynically, certainly conveniently, making use of his Welsh origin for this identification at a time of emerging Welsh consciousness.'

(*Yearbook of English Studies*, 15, 1985)

Marxism and Literary Criticism, by Terry Eagleton, London, Methuen, 1975.

Terry Eagleton's approach in this brief study is to see Marxist literary criticism as a subject, rather than as an instrument for revealing other subjects. In his preface he subject, rather than as an instrument for revealing other subjects. In his preface In his preface he writes that 'the most valuable way of discussing Marxist criticism, then, would be an historical survey of it from Marx and Engels to the present day ...' Limitations of space prevent the adoption of 'the most valuable way' and instead Eagleton discusses what he calls 'four central topics of Marxist criticism' - 'literature and history', 'form and content', 'the writer and commitment', and 'the author as producer'. This then is not the book to use to see how a Marxist approach illuminates particular works. Space has obviously restricted Eagleton's handling even of his four topics, but it is a more basic attitude of mind that has relegated discussion of specific literary works to one page on *Nostromo*, two on *The Wasteland* and one and a half on *Dombey and Son*. There are also three and a half pages on Brecht's 'epic theatre', though no individual play is mentioned. That is all the sustained specific criticism Eagleton offers. How valuable is a book about a critical methodology that does not show the methodology in action? The crucial Marxist concept of praxis is forgotten, and we end up with an intellectual, cerebral, untested theory. The essential dialectical relationship of the theory to the literary object has no place in Eagleton's study, because his theory is discussed in virtual isolation from the objects of its application. Eagleton's avoidance of literary works is paralleled by his avoidance of discussion of the situation of the writer. He concludes his discussion of art and ideology in Chapter 1 by saying that 'a scientific criticism would seek to explain the literary work in terms of the ideological structure of which it is part, yet which it transforms in its art: it would search out the principle which both ties the work to ideology and distances it from it'. But how can art distance itself from ideology? What is art but the expression of ideology? It is not something separate that can be 'tied to' ideology. A Marxist criticism, as Eagleton recognizes in his preface, 'is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis which aims to understand ideologies'; yet Eagleton himself is caught unawares in the bourgeois ideology that art somehow 'transforms', or 'distances' itself from, the ideology of its milieu. A more complex approach than Eagleton offers is necessary, one that would see art as the expression of a sub-class within the bourgeoisie, interpreting the ideology of another class - generally the economically dominant bourgeoisie. The necessary

distance from the bourgeoisie has been traditionally provided by the artist's seeking a sub-class identity through exile, expatriation or some form of artistic alienation. But Eagleton ignores these themes. He offers no consideration of the remarkable way in which writers since Elizabethan times have been presented and have presented themselves as madmen (lunatic, lover, and poet), bohemians, recluses, outsiders, exiles, possessed, wounded, blinded, and the like. This recurrent stress on the artist's alienation cries out for interpretation: is it merely an extension of bourgeois individualism into an extreme of isolation, or does it genuinely allow the writer a valid critical perspective on the class to which he is economically or socially attached? Christopher Caudwell in his *Studies in a Dying Culture* offered some pioneering examinations of these areas. But Eagleton is lukewarm about Caudwell. Eagleton is also lukewarm about Lukács, offering no engagement with Lukács's views when he summarizes them in a sub-section 'Lukács and literary form', and taking over a comment from the cold-war hatchet job on Lukács by George Lichtheim that 'Lukács belongs essentially to the great classical-humanist German tradition, and regards Marxism as an extension of it'. The point of this categorization is to discredit Lukács as a Marxist; and it is followed up by attempts to discredit him as a humanist by stressing how he followed the party line in the 1930s and I940s. But Lukács poses a problem that is central to Marxist criticism: the issue of artistic conservatism, which Lukács represents, and which has always been in conflict with modernism and progressivism of form. Eagleton is good in discussing the Lukács-Brecht confrontation, but to describe Lukács's *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* merely as 'stiff-necked Stalinist' does not advance analysis of the issue. This dilemma of modernism versus conservatism needs to be put centrally in any discussion of Marxist literary criticism. What is needed is a perspective that can see the two positions as inevitable, coexistent, dialectical components of a Marxist aesthetic, out of which a dynamic is generated, without which there would be stasis. Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky all had a predilection for traditional, realist modes in literature. Mayakovsky, Zamyatin, and Brecht espoused a modernism. That is the conflict. Summarizing Trotsky's position Eagleton writes: 'Socialist art must be "realist", but in no narrowly generic sense, for realism itself is intrinsically neither revolutionary nor reactionary.' But this is an evasion, if realist is to mean anything other than 'approved'. Yet at times Eagleton is not unaware of the conflict. His final section, 'The Author as Producer', is a valuable and interesting discussion of the theories of Brecht and Walter Benjamin. Nonetheless, his own practice demonstrates that intuitive fear of the progressive and modern of so many Marxist critics. He mentions not one writer from the last quarter of a century of literary production. His 'moderns' are all safely distanced and enshrined in the academic concept of the 'modern': the most recent writers he mentions are Brecht, Eliot, Joyce and Mayakovsky. What sort of a progressive critical

methodology is this that offers no application to the modern, let alone the contemporary? Recent critics are referred to, of course: Goldmann, Macherey, Williams, and Jameson. But not the living writers. *Marxism and Literary Criticism* remains stuck in past eras of writing (in so far as it ever rarely - mentions any writers or specific works); it is academic and self-referential, even though the preface contains the clarion call that Marxism is 'the story of the struggles of men and women to free themselves from certain forms of exploitation and oppression. There is nothing academic about those struggles, and we forget this at our cost'. The confines of space limited what could be dealt with in this study; at the same time its brevity will make it especially appealing to those who want a quick introduction to the subject, and this is unfortunate since its approach is so partial. As an introductory study it could be very misleading, but as introducing discussion into an area already informed by wider materials, ideas, and texts, it has its provocative use. (*Modern Language Review*, 74, 1979, reprinted in *Nation Review*, 1979)

The Novel and Revolution, by Alan Swingewood, London: Macmillan, I975.

The first part of this absorbing and challenging study is an informed and critically engaged survey of various Marxist approaches to literature. Dr Swingewood's own position is firm: 'A Marxist theory of literature must reject the view that literature reflects class and economic interests mechanically.' Consequently he is concerned to demonstrate the inadequacy of Plekhanov-like exercises in the sociology of literature. 'The text under analysis should not bear the status of object as with positivism, should not be used simply to illustrate social, economic and political history in which the different parts are ripped out of their context to serve as illustrative material.' He is concerned, too, to reject the utilitarian and political-educational approach to literature. He attacks Lukács for presenting Balzac, Tolstoy, and Mann as writers 'to be read for their example, acknowledged for their moral power over the reader'. Dr Swingewood offers his critique within Marxist terms. 'Lukács' "method" is not designed to explain the complex, dialectical relation between literature and society. Like Taine, he establishes a system of rigidly deterministic connections, and the specific differences between writers are explained away as a result of background, education and personal ideology.'He finds similar inadequacies in Goldmann's work where a reversion to

the positivism of Taine and the reductionist theories of Plekhanov and the later Lukacs have produced a system in which 'the novel becomes an unmediated vision of an increasingly alienated society, the writer passively responding to broad socio-economic change. The dialectical relation of writers to social group, culture, society is eliminated in favour of a fatalistic theory of history'. The strictures are considered and well made; and of the negative aspects of the critics he discusses, considered they are true. Yet at his best Lukacs offers more than Dr Swingewood allows: they are true. Yet at his best Lukaás offers more than Dr Swingewood allows: the work on Balzac and Scott was immensely positive, it drew out qualities of those writers that had been neglected, it had the excitement of critical discovery. Lukács's weaknesses in relation to modernism, however, certainly demonstrate the limitations of his method and sympathies. Dr Swingewood explores the history of modernism within a Marxist system in a long account of Soviet literary politics between I917-37. Here he offers a working example of his own advocated method, carefully and minutely relating the changes within the Party and the composition of the various writers' groups to the aesthetic debate under way. He is concerned to stress that the triumph of socialist realism was not an inevitable consequence of Marxist politics: that from the beginning there had been alternative traditions; that though Marx, Engels, Lenin, Plekhanov, and Trotsky all preferred Realism to Expressionism, Futurism, Cubism, Formalism, Constructivism, and so on, it was not inevitable that these and other modernist forms should have been ultimately proscribed. He directly relates the eventual triumph of socialist realism to Stalin's manoeuvres for political power; socialist realism emerged from the specific circumstances of realpolitik, rather than as the inevitable aesthetic consequence of Marxism. The rejection of all forms of modernism and the adoption of what Dr Swingewood calls 'a profoundly conservative aesthetic' instead of 'the development of a genuinely revolutionary realism' remains the central issue in any debate on Marxist literary criticism. Dr Swingewood sees the problems: the losses in terms of creativity, the limitations in terms of existing critical methods. But when in Part II of his study he offers his own specific readings, he himself remains trapped in the restrictive moulds of aesthetic conservatism. It is good that he discusses Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, a neglected and important work: he points to one of its major qualities: how London's 'concept of praxis and the related sociological understanding that a society based on privilege and inequality must of necessity generate conflict and thus a source of change ... distinguishes *The Iron Heel* from the anti-utopias of Wells'. But when it comes to the aesthetic qualities of the novel Dr Swingewood offers nothing more than a paraphrase of Orwell's uncomprehending literary conservatism: 'a crudely written, badly constructed novel seriously lacking in genuine characters'. Bourgeois realism's concept of 'genuine characters' constricts Dr Swingewood as much as it constricted the Lukács he rejects;

he fails to see that London was engaged in formal experimentation, and that the forms in which he experimented were popular, not conservative literary ones. With Zamiatin's *We*, Dr Swingewood again provides insights into the politics, but he totally neglects the vital, magical visionary Nature that Zamiatin captures in opposition to the mathematical, abstract, yet brilliantly shimmering futuristic urban society. To ignore the formal qualities of these two novels is to miss their greatness, and to misunderstand their political terms - for the political issues are dramatized, enacted integrally with their chosen narrative modes, their oblique characterization, and the referential shorthand of their symbolic settings. With Conrad and Koestler, Dr Swingewood ultimately falls back into a position of censure that forgets his earlier stress on literature's autonomy. He accuses Conrad of 'insincerity' because 'Verloc cannot attain tragic stature since his values ... do not place him in conflict with society' and he claims that in *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* the organic link between protagonist and society 'has disappeared so their fate becomes entirely personal and not, as was the case with the nineteenth-century realists, emblematic of a generation, group, or class'. Yet from another perspective the greatness of Conrad's achievement in these two novels is his presentation of his protagonists' alienation from social connexions: his presenting this in a modernist, absurdist way, not in the moribund mode of nineteenth-century bourgeois tragedy: and his early capturing here of an emblem that has gained increasing literary and social representative significance, the 'outsider' social type, developed further in Hesse and Camus. But Dr Swingewood has a prejudged sense of what is a relationship to society (which precludes even as representative a one as an absurdist alienation), and a predilection for outmoded forms - why would 'tragic stature' be something to attain? With Koestler an even cruder reductionism ultimately operates. The aesthetic strategies of *Darkness at Noon* are ignored in favour of an historical-political account of Koestler's career and Stalin's purges. We move between the fictional Rubashov and the historical Bukharin too readily; so that in the final assessment of the novel the documentary is substituted for the literary: 'The strength of *Darkness at Noon* lies in Koestler's meticulous understanding of the bureaucratic Stalinist mind; its great weakness must ultimately rest with its selective and distorted historical grasp of Bolshevism or Stalinism.' For all its many and valuable insights, *The Novel and Revolution* does not provide a synthesis of the positivist or documentary and the aesthetic or formalist approaches to fiction. When it comes to specific analysis Dr Swingewood ignores all those literary features that comprise the novel, all the literary assessments of form, plot, mode, approach; he never examines how they relate to the documentary materials, how the theme of revolution interacts with the bourgeois novel form and can produce something new. He is good on indicating failures in the old: how in the 1840s the English novel of capital and labour collapsed through its irrelevant and digressive plots that drew on

depoliticized melodrama. He is interesting on the confrontations of literary programmes in the Soviet Union from 1917 to the 1930s. But when he moves from programmes to specific fiction, and from past fiction to twentieth-century fiction, he is disappointing. The literary problems that Jack London and Zamiatin and Conrad and Koestler confronted, their attitude to and their handling of their material within the available choices, and their specific solutions, remain unexamined.
(*Modern Language Review*, 73, 1978, reprinted in *Nation Review*, 1978)

Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s, edited by Frank Gloversmith, Brighton: Harvester Press; Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press. I980. *Roy Fuller*, by Allen E. Austin, (Twayne's English Authors Series, 253), Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall. 1979.

Class, Culture and Social Change is an eclectic collection of essays that provide some new and rewarding approaches to a study of English culture in the 1930s. The editor, Frank Gloversmith, contributes two pieces: the first, 'Defining Culture' examines the essays on culture by J.C. Powys, Clive Bell, and T.S. Eliot, whose elitism is brought out in comparison with R.H. Tawney's study which embodies 'a remorseless exposure of the inextricable connections between elites and the stratification of social classes'. Mr Gloversmith's second piece looks at ambiguities in the work of Orwell and Auden, two writers often seen as sympathetic to the left. With Auden he examines the notorious textual revisions of the poems: 'The major erasure is of all images of social revolution, of all notions of possible change.' With Orwell he examines *The Road to Wigan Pier* in the context of the available Diary entries of Orwell's commissioned report on the conditions of the unemployed, demonstrating how *The Road* consistently removed all evidence of intellectual, radical, committed left-wing thinkers amongst the working class he encountered and who, indeed, gave him hospitality. 'The frequently repeated claim that nobody in the working class could read or understand Marxist works, or could claim to be "ideologically sound" is (to put it mildly) disingenuous.' Mr Gloversmith explicitly confines his examination of Orwell's much proclaimed 'integrity' to the works, not the man: his essay raises, but leaves unanswered, the question of why and for what purpose the former Burmese policeman and later broadcaster of Imperial propaganda to wartime India was reporting on the unemployed, seeking out a militancy and activism that is given no place in the published work. Political ambiguities are explored in Valentine Cunningham's account of *Left Review's Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War*, and in John Coombes's more substantial and considered exploration of 'British Intellectuals and the Popular Front', which indicates both the positive aspects of this movement (the

50,000 subscribers to the Left Book Club) and its weaknesses: 'the dilution of collective revolutionary potential by the invocation of individuality and the maintenance of bourgeois critical norms'. Alun Howkins offers a careful and sympathetic study of another political moment whose complex nature has been variously assessed, the 'third period' of the Communist party of Great Britain, 1930-35, during which the party isolated itself from a co-opted labour movement: 'it was not simply that the Labour Party could not resolve the contradictions of the crisis - they had themselves become the agents of capitalism's continuing survival'; and Mr Howkins offers a useful survey of the creation of 'the foundations at least of a visible revolutionary and oppositional culture'. Stuart Laing provides an important read ing of an unjustly neglected work of committed fiction, John Sommerfield's *May Day* and Martin Ceadel contributes a valuable survey of the prophecies of war in popular fiction from 1918-39. David Mellor provides a valuable overview of British visual art in the 1930s, from the effect on the expatriates of the suspension of the Gold Standard, through the appeals of a fascist modernism, to the new patronage of Shell-Mex. The British landscape, which provided a new stimulus to some of the returned expatriates, is approached in another context in John Lowerson's account of the 'Battle for the Countryside' between the developing rambling and hiking movements and the big landowners denying access. The overall emphasis on male achievements in the arts, culture, and politics is alleviated by only one contribution from a woman, Jane Lewis's account of 'Women Between the Wars': a carefully researched piece that documents in sometimes harrowing detail how, amongst other issues, 'policies on maternity care were affected by rivalries within the medical profession, and were eventually dictated largely by the interests of specialists, while problems of health and nutrition were ignored for political reasons'.

Allan Austin's *Roy Fuller* offers a survey of Fuller's literary career from the thirties, when 'de rigeur socialist feelings find expression in "Ballad of the Lost Heir", and there is the mandatory Spanish Civil War poem', through wartime military service to the suburban muse of the fifties, and the awakening of some spiritual awarenesses in the later work. Although Professor Austin concludes 'Fuller has been frequently generalized as a politically oriented writer and while this description is founded on solid evidence, it is too facile and delimiting', little exploration of political themes or social context is offered. The approach confines itself to brief paraphrase and to indicating literary elegancies. The novels are dealt with, though assessed as inferior to the poetry, and the criticism also receives notice. The study as a whole avoids claiming too much for its subject, but suggests 'literary history will almost certainly record that Roy Fuller was one of the handful of Englishmen who sustained the quality of British poetry during the

relatively lean period from 1950 to 1960' and defines him as 'the preeminent British ruminative poet of his age'.

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The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition, edited by H. Gustav Klaus, Brighton: Harvester, 1982. *The Radical Imagination and the Liberal Tradition: Interviews with English and American Novelists*, edited by Heide Ziegler and Christopher Bigsby, London: Junction Books, 1982.

The Socialist Novel in Britain is an excellent collection of nine succinct essays. It 'is intended more as a beginning than as the last word on the subject', the editor remarks in the introduction, a preliminary attempt at establishing a canon of texts, something that has not yet been done. The contributors discuss works by Ernest Jones, Thomas Martin Wheeler, J.W. Overton, E. Lynn Linton, Margaret Harkness, Robert Tressell, Patrick MacGill, John Macdougall Hay, James C. Welsh, Ethel Carnie, H. R. Barbor, H.G. Wells, Mary Agnes Hamilton, Gwyn Jones, Lewis Jones, Jack Jones, Gwyn Thomas, Henry Green, George Blake, Simon Blumenfeld, Alec Brown, Walter Greenwood, Walter Brierley, James Barke, James Lansdale Hodson, Harold Heslop, Grassic Gibbon, Jack Lindsay, Len Doherty, Herbert Smith, Robert Bonnar, Alan Sillitoe, David Storey, Mervyn Jones, Raymond Williams, and John Berger, and we realize how little of this material is ever brought into literary discussion, how absent it is from the usual literary maps. As Professor Klaus stresses, 'what is offered here even on the nineteenth century cannot lay any claim to comprehensiveness. No study or bibliography of that period has as yet revealed the real scope of what has survived as novel-writing by working men and women and socialists'. So that here we have a truly functional criticism, a practical attempt to bring into the area of discussion these predominantly-unknown books. These are not essays on well-worn themes and familiar texts; the contributors all face the task of displaying the nature of these works in the act of criticism, of both offering sufficient description to introduce the works and of sustaining the discussion at a critical level that is positive, encouraging the reader to turn to the books. All achieve these demands while avoiding any suggestion of special pleading. It is amazing how little is known about even the supposedly better-known figures. John Goode writes about Margaret Harkness, whose *A City Girl* Engels praised. 'The evidence about her is muddled and confusing.' 'Was she a Christian radical or a humanist following in George Eliot's footsteps?' He offers a reading of three of her novels and argues persuasively that they 'ought to be read by anyone concerned with the implications for the literary production of the socialist movement'. The phrase 'little is known about' recurs

throughout the volume, but the contributors succeed in providing a wide historical coverage of the material, from Martha Vicinus's excellent account of Chartist fiction to a valuable reading of three contemporary novelists by Kernan Ryan. Approaches are varied. Raymond Williams raises a series of problems in finding appropriate methodologies for approaching Welsh fiction. Ramon Lopez Ortega examines the language of the working-class novel of the I930s, and the editor discusses some neglected novels of the same decade. Jack Mitchell discusses three anti-capitalist novels published in I914, J.M. Rignall looks at two writers of the period between Chartism and the 1880s, and Ingrid von Rosenberg looks at the 1950s and early 1960s. All of the chapters are rewarding; they stimulate interest, they critically engage with this unfamiliar material, briefly set it in its available biographical and historical context, and relate it to the living issue of rediscovering a repressed continuity of socialist tradition.

The 'radical imagination' of *The Radical Imagination and the Liberal Tradition* has nothing to do with radical in the sense of socialist. The book is a collection of interviews with English and American novelists, and the starting point is John Gardner's argument in *On Moral Fiction* that there has been 'a retreat from the moral function of art and a disengagement from the real'. Not one of the living writers discussed in Professor Klaus's volume is interviewed. Academic novelists predominate, novelists, that is, whose economic base is or has been the university: one female, Iris Murdoch, and eight males, John Barth, Malcolm Bradbury, Robert Coover, Stanley Elkin, John Gardner, William Gass, John Hawkes, and Angus Wilson. Donald Barthelme, John Fowles, and Doris Lessing are the only non campus-based writers. It is easy to think of major writers not interviewed, and the interviews are not as interesting as those in *Paris Review*, collected in the various 'Writers at Work' volumes. There have been interviews that are immensely exciting and stimulating: Daniel Odier's interviews with William Burroughs in *The Job* (Paris, 1969; Grove Press, New York, 1974) and Terry Wilson's interviews with Brion Gysin in *Here to Go: Planet R-101* (Re/Search Publications, San Francisco, 1982). But this volume generally lacks that excitement. (*Yearbook of English Studies,*16, 1986)

Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist, by Fredric Jameson, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1979.

Fredric Jameson's study of Wyndham Lewis is a stimulating and rewarding approach not only to 'surely the least read and most unfamiliar of all the great modernists of his generation that included the names of

Pound and Eliot, Joyce, Lawrence and Yeats, but also to that whole strand of modernists from Lewis through Lawrence and Henry Miller to William Burroughs, about whose work traditional formal criticism has had little to say. Though focused on Lewis, this approach, using the 'coordinates' of 'ideology, psychoanalysis, narrative analysis', provides a way into the work of those writers who offer 'a deliberate provocation of the reader fully as much as they challenge a ritualistic cult of belles lettres or high style'. Professor Jameson is able to see the '"flaws"' as 'only confirm[ing] the immense and liberating energies of Lewis's style'. Indeed, the very mention of 'Lewis's often hastily composed works' and 'sloppy writing' stands out as residual from a mode of reading and judgement already superseded by Jameson's approach: just as, discussing *Self Condemned*, he remarks how 'even in the most advanced mode of production, there is a layered sedimentation and persistence of types of alienation specific to more archaic modes: thus the commodity reification of capitalism does not supersede, but is rather laid over and coexists with the power systems of precapitalist societies - as, for instance, in machismo and sexism'. Professor Jameson sees the 'sheer proliferation' of Lewis's sentence production, the multiplicity of'subcodes or idiolects' as relating not in 'their hierarchy but rather their sheer multiplicity, their jealously respected inconsistency with one another'; 'The words, unable to go together properly, end up projecting the warring planes and angles of a cubist painting'. He distinguishes this from the aesthetic of modernism that has become enshrined by the academy. 'The great sentences of Lewis have therefore little enough in common with that Flaubertian aesthetic of the "mot juste", of which Joyce, with his "artfully" placed adverbs and his trace of Paterian unction, is the hegemonic modernist realization.' 'Collage-composition' is Professor Jameson's descriptive term for Lewis's method; the literal collages collages of Lawrence in *Kangaroo* and of Burroughs's cut-ups are clear analogies; and he extends the pattern from the detail of the sentence to the larger blocks of narrative in a central passage that needs quotation at length. The dialectic of innovation in the art of capitalism is best initially grasped, not in terms of formal invention, as the apologists of modernism have generally described it, but in terms of the exhaustion of the content of older forms, which, given paradigmatic expression in the great realistic novels, is thereby at once institutionalized, reappropriated and alienated ... The modernist renewal must be effectuated within the confines of dead storytelling conventions which remain massively in place, in a world already overinfected with culture and dead forms and with a stifling weight of dead ideas. In this situation the novelist is less a creative than a performing artist. His primary text, his 'book' or script, is given him from the outset, in the form of the banal situations and stereotypes of a degraded everyday life, gossipy women, impecunious Bohemia, a dreary sentimental entanglement; while his 'composition' of these scenes proves in reality to be an interpretation of them in

much the same way that an actor's voice restores vitality to a faded text.' (pp. 64-65) ProfessorJameson is insightful, too, on various recurrent narrative structures in Lewis's fiction. The pseudo-couple he sees as 'a structural device for preserving narrative as such': 'The empty stasis of Baudelairean ennui can be retrieved for narrative time by the co-presence of the pseudo-couple of *Waiting for Godot*.' He sees the device as 'the reimposition of a framework that allows powerfully anti-narrative tendencies to be safely renarrativized', though he stresses that the result is 'binary opposition, not genuine dialectical contradiction'. Such static opposition is seen as a characteristic of Lewis's work, and Professor Jameson explores it in terms of the national allegory of the war of the nation-states that 'constitute the very backdrop and organizational framework of the works written before World War I'. 'Lewis's narrative is locked into this static binary opposition in much the same way that his national allegory is paralysed by the conception of nation-states (rather than the more genuine historical dynamic of class antagonism) as the equivalent subjects of a history which can thus only end in catastrophe.' This is an important essay in its elucidation of models of approach that positively help in our appreciation of the texts examined. If at times the critical language seems to draw attention to itself in the mandarin way of so much semiotic and post-structuralist critical writing, nonetheless this particular study offers, as Professor Jameson writes of Lewis, 'the exhilaration that unexpectedly takes the place of the more predictable pathos that such an experience of the breakdown of social language ought logical

(*Modern Language Review*, 77, 1982, reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, 142, Gale, 2001)

Unholy Pleasure or the Idea of Social Class, by P.N. Furbank, Oxford, London, and New York: Oxford University Press. 1985.

P. N. Furbank opens *Unholy Pleasure* with a splendidly challenging assertion: 'People in Britain at the moment talk too much about "class".' His concern is with class as discourse, with talking and writing about class rather than with the experience of living in a class society. That Britain is a deeply divided society whose economic system depends on a series of social divisions is less his concern than that preoccupation with the minutiae of social discrimination that characterizes Britain. It is with the idea of class and the images of class in literature rather than with the facts of social inequality and exploitation that he deals. In the first part, 'The Meaning of Class', he offers chapters on 'The Rhetoric of "Class"', 'The "Bourgeoisie"', '"Class" and the Historians', and '"Class" and the Sociologists'. The second part, '"Class" and the Historians',

and '"Class" and the Sociologists'. The second part, 'Before "Class", and After?', deals with 'The "Social Hierarchy" ', 'Honour and the Honnete', 'The "Gentleman"', and 'The Escape'. Part I includes a discussion of 'Marx's Unwritten Chapter', Part II a discussion 'Nietzsche Revised'. It is a strange book, wide-ranging and full of provocative insights: It is a strange book, wide-ranging and full of provocative insights: The novels of Thackeray and Meredith and Trollope, which attach such importance to the The 'gentleman', are not really instructional or model-giving. They are, rather, from this point of view, pure romances - romances about the ineffable and unlearnable state of grace known as 'being a gentleman'. Mr Furbank indicates the evasiveness and yet the social effectiveness of such a totalizing control system. 'Trollope's habitual answer, when asked to define a "gentleman", was that it was a "thing so impossible of definition and so capable of recognition".' But Furbank offers his own significant definition here, drawing on on Robin Gilmour's *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (London, 1981): ‘The realistic message of'gentlemanliness' is that it gives, or seems to give, the right to exclude - to dismiss fellow-mortals as 'non-gentlemen'. By the time of Trollope the 'gentleman' concept, though never more prized, has become a system for ruling-out - in which it resembles 'class', which is purely a matter of separation and affirms no positive values at all. Mr Furbank offers some provocative literary judgements: 'If Proust's work is, in its very method, egalitarian, so even more plainly is Joyce's.' Proust and Joyce are are not the writers that would most readily spring to mind as embodiments of egalitarianism, but Mr Furbank's case is 'that the device of "interior monologue" militates against social absolutes and works strongly in favour of egalitarianism, indeed almost compels it', and he goes on to assert that 'Proust's formulation, that "in reality every reader is, while he is reading, the reader of his own self", is a declaration of human solidarity'. He is less enthusiastic about Virginia Woolf: 'One sometimes feels it a pity that Virginia Woolf did not trust interior monologue more. Every now and then her novels seem to run aground on the rocks of social prejudice, in a way from which this technique might eventually have preserved her.' Confronting Lionel Trilling's argument 'that "class" was the proper and destined matter of the novel', Mr Furbank argues that 'the great Victorian novelists made very little of "class" in the strict sense' and he writes: 'I feel like saying that the more important truth is almost the opposite: I mean, that the true destiny of fiction, whatever is true of its origins, lay in transcending these "class" preoccupations.' whatever is true of its origins, lay in transcending these "class" preoccupations.' Whether such 'transcending' would be possible without a major social revolution, however, Mr Furbank does not explore. This is a gentle book, for all its dealing with such an explosive topic. He writes:

> Let us consider the familiar fact that much of our ethical vocabulary, that is to say of our terms of moral praise and blame, derives from social position. Thus we have 'gentle', 'generous', 'honest', 'honourable', 'courteous', 'noble', 'well-bred', 'liberal'; and 'base', 'vile', 'villain', 'boor', 'churlish', 'mean', 'clown', 'degraded' - all of which, though we could hardly get on without them as praise-words or blame-words, refer by origin to social privilege or medieval medieval legal status. The thought is a little embarrassing.

Other writers might well have used a stronger term than 'embarrassing'.
Modern Language Review, 83 (1988)

An Introduction to the Australian Novel, 1830-1930, by Barry Argyle, Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1972.

Until recently the norm of criticism of Australian literature was the journal article on the individual writer or individual work. These specific explications and evaluations established a canon of Australian writing for critical study. Now with this work done, more recent critics have offered wider-reaching surveys, examinations of larger movements, studies of themes. Mr Argyle's study is one of the most valuable and stimulating of this new wave of approaches. His thesis is the dominant influence of Scott and Byron on the development of Australian fiction. 'Scott provided the pattern for adventure -the result of two societies in conflict - and the scenery. Byron provided the typical heroes, who who admitted no social allegiance.' The readings Mr Argyle gives substantiate his claim for the importance of this influence. Of course there were other influences, of course the influence of Scott and Byron was variable. But the value of this study is in its isolating this continuous, important strand of influence. It can always be qualified in those individual readings of individual works: but those future individual studies will be the richer for the isolation of this important line in the Australian novel. In an area not often illuminated by wider ideas, Mr Argyle has attempted to introduce something of the liveliness and stimulation of a Leslie Fiedler. He is concerned to bring in those sorts of issues we tend to label psychological, sociological, relevant. His study is valuably sensitive to the issues of Australian racism and the destruction of the Aboriginals; to the role of women in Australian society, and their early achievement of an emancipation; to the implications and consequences of the convict settlement. Unfortunately these issues are picked up briefly, dropped, and picked up again, rather than developed. Because of his chosen method of devoting ten chapters to to ten writers, Mr Argyle's

study is a work of fragments rather than broad sweeps. By the end of the volume he has glanced at these issues in their expression by the ten writers, Mr Argyle's study is a work of fragments rather than broad sweeps. By the end of the volume he has glanced at these issues in their expression by the individual writers, and he has thrown up various valuable ideas. But the ideas do not control the shape of the study. The ten novelists are Savery, Rowcroft, McCombie, Tucker, Kingsley, Clarke, Boldrewood, Furphy, Hay, and Henry Handel Richardson. The first four at least have not been widely read and Mr Argyle valuably draws attention to them, making claims not for their intrinsic merits but for their provision of historical, sociological, and literary evidence.. The literary-historical thematic approach Mr Argyle follows does not require major works for its texts; indeed, its material may indeed, its material may often be better found in lesser works. Mr Argyle sensibly avoids pressing large claims for most of the works he discusses. Indeed, he undervalues some of his material. Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* becomes subsumed into the mediocre level of much of the other material treated, and its considerable merits pass largely unrecognized. The reading of Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* allows much less for it than its Australian champions would claim. Moreover, Mr Argyle is not always than its Australian champions would claim. Moreover, Mr Argyle is not always aware of the important critical and scholarly work that has been done on the writers he discusses. His bibliography is shamefully sketchy, random, out of date; it is a disgrace to the publisher. The Clarendon Press imprint might well lead the writers he discusses. His bibliography is shamefully sketchy, random, out of date; it is a disgrace to the publisher. The Clarendon Press imprint might well lead the unwary reader to believe the bibliography bore some relationship to the state of literary scholarship about Australian literature, and to the extent and and to the extent and availability of material; it is utterly misleading. Mr Argyle's claim that Henry Handel Richardson 'is the only Australian woman to have written a novel worth much attention' is ridiculous; not only because of his seeming ignorance of a great writer like Christina Stead, but for his disregard for that whole range of women writers attention' is ridiculous; not only because of his seeming ignorance of a great writer like Christina Stead, but for his disregard for that whole range of women writers from Mrs Campbell Praed, Catherine Spence, Katherine Susannah Pritchard, and Eleanor Dark onward who have certainly as much justification for critical study as those earlier male writers Mr Argyle considers. But these sorts of carelessnesses should not be allowed to detract from the originality and liveliness of the positive aspects of Mr Argyle's study.

(*Yearbook of English Studies*, 4, 1974)

The Writer in Australia: A Collection of Literary Documents 1856-1964, edited by John Barnes, Melbourne and London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

This enjoyable and useful anthology is misleadingly titled and introduced. The documents Mr Barnes has conveniently collected provide a very partial view of This enjoyable and useful anthology is misleadingly titled and introduced. The documents Mr Barnes has conveniently collected provide a very partial view of 'the situation of the creative writer in Australia over the past one hundred years'. Later Mr Barnes writes in his introduction 'I have not set out to enforce a particular view of nationalism in Australian writing, but rather to provide the materials for an understanding of how the problem of national identity has affected both writers and critics'. This is nearer to the truth - documents on Australian literary nationalism; but unfortunately the selection does enforce a particular interpretation for it implies that all writers were concerned primarily with the problems of national identity in Australia. Consequently those writers who left Australia, those writers concerned with international movements (like the important socialist realists), those critics concerned with literature not tied to any historical or nationalistic limitations (like many of the academics) are ignored: Christina Stead, Patrick White, Henry Handel Richardson, Frank Hardy, Jack Lindsay, Mungo MacCallum, A.J.A. Waldock, R.G. Howarth find no place or comment here. And those writers who are represented appear mainly in their nationalistic hats: Lawson's account of' ‘"Pursuing Literature" in Australia' is given without a mention of his later comments on the pursuit in London; A.G. Stephens is represented at length but there is no indication of the large amount of criticism he wrote on English and American literature and the role he played in their dissemination (the selection he made of his own criticism was predominantly non-Australian in concern); Marcus Clarke's preface to Gordon's poems is given, but his essays on Balzac, Dickens, and Daudet go unrecorded. By presenting his documents on literary nationalism in isolation from the material on the discussion, criticism, and reading of American and European literature, Mr Barnes implies that Australian writers were interested only in the work of each other, and that Australian writing provided its own tradition and developed in isolation from other literature. Even if the nationalistic strain is the major one (and that is questionable) its significance cannot be assessed without some awareness of the competing strands. The failings of a partial selection could have been qualified by useful annotation, but there is no bibliography and there are rarely indications of other works by the writers represented. In his linking commentaries, Mr Barnes makes some strange remarks. He writes, 'Clarke's version of the Australian landscape was really a projection of his own inner state, a personal condition, which did not depend upon the visible external landscape and his relationship with it'.

The simplistic implication is that there is an 'objective' landscape, anything other than which is a 'psychological' projection. Certainly, as a number of writers in the collection remark, there was a tendency in early Australian writing to look at landscapes with an English vocabulary; Rex Ingamells's Jindyworobak manifesto sharply points out examples, and P.R. Stephensen's article 'The Foundations of Culture in Australia' offers a more generalized account of the same theme. The danger comes from assuming that now (whenever the 'now' is) an objective Australian position has been reached. The first piece represented, Frederick Sinnett's urbane and witty 'The Fiction Fields of Australia' (edited in 1966 by Cecil Hadgraft for the University of Queensland Press and reprinted here again) points out how there is nothing intrinsic to Australia to prevent significant fiction from being written; that was in 1856, but the laments about the thinness, coarseness, and other horrors of antipodean life still persist from the Europhiles, and the myth relates to the two other problems the Australian writer confronts: the danger of writing for the 'overseas' market, writing with its assumptions, imitating its forms and even its materials rather than expressing Australia. Sinnett and in 1896 Desmond Byrne both indicated how, though most Australians even then lived in the cities, it was the exoticisms of emus and Ned Kellys and the outback that the English reader wanted. But the alternative, of writing for an Australian readership in an Australian context, bred the other danger of parochialism, of an uncritical isolationism aggravated by a narrowing concept of what is 'Australian'. The critics selected here struggled between these twin dooms, striking sparks of illumination between their poles. In general the essays are interesting reading, though by the end the limited positions have been repeated a little exhaustingly. The worst piece is Vincent Buckley's 'The Image of Man in Australian Poetry' (1957) where the works of literature are put down as subordinate to the critical theory and condemned for betraying his idea of Australian literature. Of the 1920s *Vision* group he writes, 'It is unpleasant to carp at a poetic effort which has already had its effect, but it is even more unpleasant to contemplate the principal strains of that effort itself ... it cannot be regarded as a particularly inspiring programme for poetry ...' The particular moralism (a pious Catholic-*Scrutiny* distaste for 'a poetic universe in which man is no more than a sum of erotic incidents' that leaves 'its possessors unready for too many of the inevitable human situations') is familiar enough; its presentation as a programme of cultural prescriptivism is a sad warning of the danger of a domination of lice on the Antipodean locks.
(*Modern Language Review*, 66, 1971)

Images of Society and Nature: Seven Essays on Australian Novels, by Brian Kiernan, Melbourne and London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

One of Australia's basic myths has been of its democratic traditions. This has provided a structure for the writings of historians, political scientists, and literary critics, and only now is it coming to be questioned. Brian Kiernan tackles one aspect of the myth: the idea that there is a particularly Australian tradition of writing in the short story and novel, that this tradition embodies the best of Australian writing in those genres, and that it is a consciously democratic and Australian tradition, continuing from the nationalistic 1890s the manner established by Henry Lawson and Joseph Furphy. The manner was characterized by an emphasis not on the and Joseph Furphy. The manner was characterized by an emphasis not on the interior life of the individual but on his activities as a social being (particularly his work experiences), by an identification with a working class viewpoint, and by the interior life of the individual, and by the employment of the idiom of the man on the job with his slang and colloquial rhythms. Mr Kiernan's concluding essay, 'The Australian Novel and Tradition' presents a valuable argument against the idea of this tradition: ‘one good reason for doubting the importance placed on the 'Lawson-Furphy tradition' is that none of its exponents has been able to suggest more than superficial resemblances that none of its exponents has been able to suggest more than superficial resemblances between its presumed founders. Lawson and Furphy have little in common except similar social material; the uses they make of it are not only quite different, they are of a different order. And the individual essays that comprise Images of Society and Nature provide the concrete expresson of an alternative to the received myth that Vance Palmer and A.A.Phillips - to cite its major exponents - argued. 'If Mr Phillips' tradition is "the Australian tradition" in our fiction then it has nothing to do with the most important of our novelists'; and Mr Kiernan's essays, he explains, 'deal with what I consider to be the most original and imaginative of Australian novels - by Joseph Furphy, Henry Handel Richardson, Christina Stead, Xavier Herbert, Patrick White, and Thomas Keneally'. He concedes that there might be arguments for the inclusion of other writers - Marcus Clarke and Martin Boyd are two notable omissions. But the six writers Mr Kiernan does include have all been seen as major figures in Australian fiction (even though Keneally's recent work has raised considerable doubts about his writing). And that these six writers have all had their serious advocates is, of course, the essence of Mr Kiernan's argument - these serious advocates is, of course, the essence of Mr Kiernan's argument - these 'most original and imaginative of Australian novels' do not fit into the Lawson-Furphy tradition. Mr Kiernan's inclusion of Furphy in his list makes the point nicely: there is another side to Furphy than the

democratic, colloquial, writer-of the-people Furphy. Those qualities ally him with Lawson, but Mr Kiernan is concerned to emphasize Furphy's literary self-consciousness, and his exploitation of his self-conscious literariness, his play with expectations of genre, ironic denials of the expectations. It is this literary self-consciousness, this deliberate use of established genres, and the literary sophistication involved in this, that Mr Kiernan particularly looks for in his essays: and he is concerned to point out not only the use of the peculiarly Australian genres - convict novel, pioneering novel, outback exploration novel - but also the European modes – *Bildungsroman*, *Künstlerroman*, and so on. He is concerned with the relation of his writers to European literariness, rather than to a specifically nationalistic, political, Australian social context. Of course, the Lawson-Furphy tradition had its basis in literary reality as well as in sociological, programmatic, extra-literary concerns. And within it Lawson produced great work; the new historians revaluing the democratic myths have detected racism and jingoism in his writing and dubbed him 'fascist'; those aspects were there and qualify, but cannot obliterate, the essential picture that Phillips, Palmer, and others outlined. The full map, however, was more complex than the exponents of the democratic myth indicated; and Mr Kiernan's study valuably assists in this process of indicating the variety, the plurality, of Australian literary assists in this process of indicating the variety, the plurality, of Australian literary traditions and achievements.
(*Yearbook of English Studies*, 4, 1974)

Christina Stead, by R.G. Geering, Australian Writers and their Work, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1969. *Christina Stead*, by R.G. Geering, Twayne's World Authors Series, Twayne Publishers Inc., New York, 1969.

Christina Stead is one of the major innovatory prose writers in English of tins century. Thisneeds stating at the outset, since her stature, distinction and uniqueness do not sufficiently emerge from Professor Geering's two studies. Despite the enthusiastic rediscovery of her work in 1965, she has received little critical discussion. And welcome as it is to see two volumes on her in these standard series, it is unfortunate that they are both by the same writer. For instead of a possible dialectic of discussion and an ensuing extension of debate, we are given a repetition of the same values, the same approach; and since both the series require essentially introductory studies, it is a repetition of in the main superficialities. Geering is concerned in both studies with running through each of Christina Stead's eleven works of fiction chronologically. (He mentions, but does not deal with, the five books she translated or edited.) Since five of her novels have at

the time of this review still not been reissued, this approach has certain advantages, and boring as plot summaries are, nonetheless they provide some of the enticement of a movie trailer. However, in addition to its somewhat pedestrian flatness, this approach necessitates dealing with some of what in Geering's judgement is Christina Stead's less successful work first. And there is a pedestrianism in the sub-headings that divide the Twayne's World Authors Series (TWAS) chapters into compartments of 'Imagery and Symbolism,' 'Point of View,' 'Narrative Method,' 'Significance of the Conclusion' and 'The Story' etc. There is not that engaging excitement with which Randall Jarrell reintroduced the reading public to *The Man Who Loved Children* in 1965. There are also certain oddities about Geering's procedure. His only sustained passages of quotation in the shorter Australian Writers and Their Work volume (AWTW) are from Christina Stead's first two books which, for all their merits, are by no means the works which one would want to use to establish her reputation, cite as typical of her style, or introduce her to new readers. Quotation from *The Man Who Loved Children*, which Geering acknowledges as her masterpiece, would have been more impressive and persuasive of her strengths. In the longer TWAS volume, although there is representative quotation from all the novels discussed, the last two books, *The Puzzleheaded Girl* and *Dark Places of the Heart* (*Cotter's England*) are treated only skimpily: the latter, Geering writes in the preface, 'appeared after the various proportions of the study had been established and all but the final chapter written. I have treated it sparingly, because of space limitations . . .'. The obvious thing to have done would have been to have treated it responsibly, gaining space by a little rewriting of the earlier chapters, whose loose structure would not have resisted abridging. The resulting bias from this inadequate account of Christina Stead's last two books in the TWAS volume is aggravated by Geering's habit of referring back to *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* as a seed-bed of themes and ideas in later novels; this might be interesting enough in the context of an account of *Seven Poor Men*, but to refer back from more mature works to this novel shows a biographical-chronological approach that doesn't provide much critical illumination. Similarly, in his treatment of her critics and reviewers, Geering acts a little oddly; he deals in AWTW with the reception of her works in the 30s-50s (pointing out that *Letty Fox* was banned in Australia—a forgotten example of the censor's buffoonery); but he does not deal with the spate of enthusiasm that greeted her internationally after 1965: Miles Franklin, Barnard Eldershaw, and H.M. Green are mentioned—but Denis Donoghue, John Wain, Christopher Ricks and Elizabeth Hardwick, with all their varieties of critical approach, are ignored. The latter two are cited in TWAS: but this does not much alter the texture of the book—their critical approaches do not seem to have offered Geering much illumination. He introduces them as he introduces various unnamed critics whose frequently boring judgements are cited as if for an

examination question ('Discuss with reference to —'): 'Christina Stead's fiction has sometimes been said to sacrifice form for life.' But who has said so, and does it need repeating? There is a deadening flatness about the way the critics and reviewers, having gained access to the TWAS volume, are handled. Geering's own critical approach is conventionally descriptive, and theoretical or general themes are only introduced in passing in relation to the individual works. He indicates how Christina Stead's fiction is 'built not according to the dictates of a dramatic plot but on a set of character groupings and inter-relationships'; he remarks on her lifelong interest in political and social movements and the people who provide the impetus for them'; and in his concluding couple of pages (of AWTW) notes that 'characterization is the true centre of Christina Stead's fiction and in this sense she is a thoroughly traditional novelist' and that 'money, the lack of money and the city keep recurring in Christina Stead's fiction'. These are themes that could be developed by later critics in a more spacious context, and we must be grateful for Geering's having established this sketch map of the territory. But there are themes that he scarcely touches, or that touched, provoke a range of further questions. Randall Jarrell's emphasis that *The Man Who Loved Children* was 'a revolutionary work of art' finds no correlative in Geering's study. The uniqueness and unconventionality of her sexual and political concerns is lost, except in the plot summaries; and yet even there, after summarizing *Letty Fox* (in TWAS) the comfortable bourgeois note creeps through: 'Letty Fox is, obviously, an exposure of American sexual attitudes and marriage customs and what redeems Letty herself is the fact that, with all her faults, she is a better person than those who trade in marriage and divorce.' And what are her 'faults' that need 'redeeming'?—her promiscuity of course. Similarly when Geering remarks of Sam Pollitt (in AWTW) that he means well and is loyal to the wife whom he helps to destroy' he writes from an utterly alien ethic to that which the book establishes. Sam's 'loyalty' to Henny is utterly irrelevant except as part of Sam's self-congratulatory pieties. Of Henny's attacks on Sam, Geering writes: 'she taxes him with infidelity, though she knows her charges are false and though she herself has broken her marriage vows. By conventional standards she is the immoral one, but "unspeakably vile" as she can be she is redeemed in our eyes by her capacity for suffering and her genuine fellow-feeling.' But this is to introduce the vocabulary and cant of Victorian library fiction into a context in which they have no relevance; nowhere in the novel is it suggested Henny needs to be redeemed by suffering or anything else.

It is in the treatment of the political themes that Geering most outrageously flouts the available evidence. He writes in AWTW that 'nor despite her political beliefs, has she ever become an apologist for any group or compromised her art by writing propaganda', yet he gives no indication of what these beliefs are. The bibliography of the TWAS volume valuably records that Christina Stead wrote reviews for *Left*

Review and *New Masses*, and that her books themselves were reviewed in those important Marxist journals. But he utterly ignores these leads in following up her left wing political beliefs and involvements: from Geering's accounts we can find that some of the characters in the novels are left wing, and he comments on 'U.N.O. 1945,' an excerpt from an unpublished novel *I'm Dying Laughing*, that it 'reveals concerns similar' to *Cotter's England*—the reasons for the failure of socialism in the Western World'. But Geering's accounts of the novels are written in an ideological vacuum and offer no indication of the radical political interests of her work. Characterizing Sam Pollitt as 'the liberal-minded scientist who advocates the weeding out of misfits and degenerates' in AWTW, Geering does not go on to see the political texture to this study of family tyranny and to see in Sam's muddle of seeming socialism and talk of the brotherhood of man, a type of fascist demagogue. (The novel appeared in 1940.) In TWAS he offers a paragraph labelled 'Political Implications' which, travesty as it is, does cite Isidor Schneider's comment in *New Masses* on its being 'a novelization of Engel's "Origin of the Family"'; but this is never followed up. There is a whole area for discussion here that is utterly integral to Christina Stead's work. The political relationships are not simple; and any discussion would have to take seriously Christina Stead's contributions to *New Masses*: Geering usefully records her review of Louis Aragon's *The Century Was Young*—and yet seems unaware of its significance. He makes no mention of Aragon's being one of the foremost writers in the French Communist Party but explains that he lists it 'for its generalizations about the long modern novel'. Account would also need to be taken of Jonah Raskin's interview 'Christina Stead in Washington Square' (*London Magazine*, n.s. IX, 11 February 1970) where Raskin says: I've often thought that Sam Pollitt in *The Man Who Loved Children* was the American liberal who is also totalitarian. Do you see him that way?' and Miss Stead answers 'No, I don't. I see what you mean, but I don't think he is that. There are a lot of fine liberals, but liberals in general haven't much to say. Sam Pollitt is big hearted. He is a Government man carrying out Government policy without much thinking about it. He is a nice American, he's a picture of my father—that's no secret.' Geering usefully records some of Christina Stead's childhood reading, but excludes any comment on her adult reading in AWTW. In TWAS he finds analogues with Poe and Swift in *Seven Poor Men*, but he offers no exploration of the influence of her contemporaries. (Some information is available in Kunitz and Haycraft's *Twentieth Century Authors*.) The issue of influences on her fiction from other writers (political and psychological works especially) is a crucial one since so often her work carries the air of compulsion rather than of construction, so often seems the workof a naive. 'Nelly Cook's personality accounts for *Cotter's England*, both its content and its style,' Geering remarks (AWTW), and a reader unfamiliar with Christina Stead's other work might feel that this flow of Nellie's endless disturbed rhetoric

is the product of compulsive outpouring rather than controlled creation. With Sam Pollitt, as fearful a monomaniacal talker, however, there is the context of the competing and evaluating consciousness of Louie, whose placing effect offers the assurance of some critical assessment. Geering mentions Christina Stead's 'detachment' from her characters—something strikingly true of her moral and evaluative detachment, but this is allied with a great creative identification with the characters. Nelly Cook and Jonathan Crow are initially presented with utter earnestness; there are no easy, placing ironies, and the reader's process of withdrawing from them is a slow and subtle business. This creative identification with her characters, this allowing them compulsively to talk, and express themselves and their confusions, contradictions and insincerities, is Christina Stead's brilliant contribution to twentieth-century fiction. To what degree it is based on observation, on the recurrent father figure compulsively talking through her novels—and to what degree there is a conscious literary contrivance and post-Freudian structuring of the associations, is something Geering does not ask. Sam Pollitt's dreams of snakes, and his displacing interpretation of them as meaning danger, surely derives from Freudian theory. Yet such source tracing is risky. Geering in both studies parallels St Teresa's Seven Mansions of the Soul with 'The Seven Houses of Love,' the book Teresa Hawkins starts to write in *For Love Alone*. But talking at a graduate seminar at Sydney University in 1969, on her first return visit to Australia, Miss Stead adamantly denied any such intentional parallel, and any significance attaching to Teresa's name. Indeed it was as a literary naive that she consistently presented herself, explaining character and structure in terms of, that's how it was, that's what the original did, rather than in terms of literary artifice. Geering writes in AWTW, '*The Man Who Loved Children* and *For Love Alone* have the ring of personal conviction; they are written with an intensity that suggests experiences of deep significance in the writer's life. For the student of literature, however, such concerns are irrelevant or, at the most, peripheral.' Yet having listened to Miss Stead, one wonders if they are. Perhaps Geering is being too purist. It is certainly annoying that neither volume offers even the briefest account of her husband. Geering tells us she was married to William Blake, yet gives no date of marriage, no indication of his left wing politics, no date of his death, no bibliography of his novels and non-fictional works; space in the TWAS volume at least might have been found. Between them the bibliographies in the two volumes provide a good coverage, but since each omits items contained in the other, they need to be used in conjunction. The TWAS bibliography is the fullest by far, and usefully notes a selection of reviews—though quite unsystematically often fails to note the author of some reviews even when they were signed. The reviews need to be supplemented by the Australi*an Literary Studies* annual bibliography, and by the standard book review indexes and digests.

The following information is supplementary to the joint coverage. Miller and Macartney's *Australian Literature* (1950) provides information on reprintings, new editions and Canadian editions of Christina Stead's earlier books; this information is omitted by Geering, though he lists some new editions in the 1960s, which, however, need supplementing with the paperback editions of *The Man Who Loved Children* (Avon Library, New York, 1966) with as an afterword the excerpt of Randall Jarrell's introduction printed in *The Atlantic*, March 1965, pp. 166-171; and *For Love Alone* (Pacific Books, Sydney, 1969). An Italian translation of *Letty Fox: Her Luck* was published by Baldini and Castoldi in Milan (443 pp., n.d.). The English edition of *The Puzzleheaded Girl* was published by Secker and Warburg in London, 1968; 'Girl from the Beach' appeared in the *Paris Review*, 40 (Winter-Spring 1967), 12-48. The entry on Christina Stead in Kunitz and Haycraft's *Twentieth Century Authors* (1942) has been augmented by S. J. Kunitz, *Twentieth Century Authors: First Supplement* (1955), p. 949; and there is a more recent entry of a similar nature in *Contemporary Authors* ed. James M. Etheridge and Barbara Kopala, vol. 15-16 (1966, Gale Research Co., Detroit), pp. 415-16. There is further critical discussion in Colin Roderick, *Twenty Australian Novelists* (1947); Alfred H. Katz, 'Some Psychological Themes in a novel by Christina Stead' in *Literature and Psychology*, XV (Fall 1965),210-5; and Rodney Pybus, 'The Light and the Dark: The Fiction of Christina Stead' in *Stand*, X (1968), 30-37.
(*Australian Literary Studies*, 4, 1970)

David Carter, *A Career in Writing: Judah Waten and the Cultural Politics of a Literary Career*, Association for the Study of Australian Literature, Toowoomba, 1997. Leigh Dale, *The English Men: Professing Literature in Australian Universities*, Association for the Study of Australian Literature, Toowoomba, 1997.

Judah Waten (1911-85) was one of the foremost writers on the left working in Australia in the century. His stories and novels presented a consistently progressive position through the Cold War period. Stories like 'Mother' have become recognised classics of Australian fiction, represented in anthology after anthology and widely translated. Expelled from the Communist Party in 1935, he rejoined in 1957, one of a handful of international writers (another was the Scots poet Hugh MacDiarmid) who joined rather than left at that point. For his political commitment Waten was, of course, vilified in the press. He was also categorised, and so marginalised, as a 'left-wing writer' at a time when the view of Australian writing as being traditionally left-wing was being dismantled by academic, cold-war commentators in favour of an

'apolitical', quasi-metaphysical aesthetic. David Carter's study is a sympathetic one, concerned to treat Waten's writing seriously. He begins rather unpromisingly - 'Judah Waten's achievement as a writer is a modest one' - and he seems nervously constrained by the perception that 'he is also an unfashionable writer according to the taste of the last two or three decades'. Judah Waten himself was always able to shrug off the unfortunate benightedness of contemporary fashions. Carter is interesting on Waten's initial avant-garde experiments, and their relationship with communism as modernity. He valuably established the context of the writers Waten knew and worked with - Vance Palmer, Frank Dalby Davison, Alan Marshall and Brian Fitzpatrick. And he goes on to examine Waten within the context of socialist realism, although little is said of those traditional qualities of positive endings, representative characters, tendency literature and so on. He is more in tune with later literary theories that emerged to displace Marxist approaches. There is an informative chapter on Waten's role as 'The Communist Man of Letters' and some valuable analysis of Waten's novels *The Unbending* and *Time of Conflict*. But Carter seems more at ease when he deals with *Alien Son* and *Distant Land* as migrant and autobiographical fictions. In the penultimate paragraph of the book's final chapter, he writes, ‘I want to end my discussion of autobiography in Waten's texts with the emphasis on the Jewish and migrant dimensions of this self-inscription.' Waten was certainly both migrant and Jew, but in his own priorities these were less important aspects of his work than his communist commitment. Although Carter looks at Waten's work in the context of autobiography, he strangely never situates Waten in a class context. His parents' class identities and occupation are never established: yet this, surely, is basic information for any study of a communist writer. Nonetheless, Carter treats Waten seriously. He is concerned to establish the conscious artistry of his work, the intelligence and intent that went into it, and he valuably rescues the clarity of the writing from unsophisticated readings of its alleged simplicity and artlessness.

The idea of Leigh Dale's *The Englishmen: Professing Literature in Australian Universities* is a welcome one. Literary academics in Australia have rarely shown much inwardness, and an examination of the nature of the discipline is long overdue. Unfortunately it suffers from a parallel lack of outwardness in English studies, that failure to take into account the social and political realm. There is no equivalent journal to *Labour History*, no *Labour Literature* or *Labour English*. This is a study of the professors of English. There is useful material about the circumstances of their appointments, and in some cases departures. It does not, however, examine their role in the work place, their relationships with their staff or their control over the syllabuses and the teaching. It is rather like that superseded constitutional history that looked at kings, and the occasional queen, but ignored the people and had little to say about social forces. Leigh Dale's concern

is the influence that Oxford educated Englishmen exercised, which she establishes as considerable. But the British isles are a very disunited kingdom. Offering no class analysis, she fails to detect political difference. A number of the professors were Scots and Irish, but she is insensitive to their often vastly different social and pedagogical attitudes from their English contemporaries. A larger problem is the lack of a social or political context. There is no recognition of the great movements of ideas in the period under examination, no taking into account the rise of the trades unions, Marxism, the Russian and Chinese revolutions, the emergence of Fascism and Nazism, the Spanish Civil War, the Cold War. Did none of these ideas and events have any impact on the teaching of the subject, the selection of texts, the selection, and rejection, of staff? It may well be that social and political issues were excluded from English studies by the professors - but this very exclusion is a political act of great interest. The book's other concern is the introduction of Australian literature. For most of the period under examination, Australian literature was a modern and contemporary literature. Up until the 1970s, the Oxford University undergraduate English syllabus ended in the 1870s. Dale does not take into account that one of the resistances to teaching Australian literature was that larger resistance to teaching modern literature at all, rather than any imperialist, metropolitan conspiracy. Dale cites the opposition of Vincent Buckley amongst others to 'sociological' approaches to Australian literature. But this was, of course, a coded objection to socialist and communist approaches. The academic move into Australian literature is inextricably involved in Cold War cultural politics. The reactionary political agenda was to kidnap and detach writers like Lawson and Furphy from the left by depoliticising, or de-radicalising, discussion of them; and to promote figures like Christopher Brennan, Patrick White and Randolph Stow. Dale notes the role of *Quadrant* under James McAuley's editorship, but the lack of a political context precludes any adequate discussion. More needs to be said than 'the reputation of McAuley, and that of the journal, were damaged after the revelation' of CIA funding for the Congress of Cultural Freedom. To claim that the establishment of the chair of Australian Literature at the University of Sydney 'represented a conscious attempt to reclaim Australian Literature from those working outside universities' is a bizarrely misleading way of putting it. Colin Roderick, one of the prime movers in the campaign for the chair, had always worked outside the university. If 'reclaiming' was to be done it was to be from radical critics - historians within the universities and unionists, socialists and communists outside. The significance of G.A. Wilkes' early article questioning the valuation of the 1890s short story writers and balladists was not that he alleged that the works were bad because they were popular, but that the 'best' work of those writers was 'non-political', and that their explicitly political works failed as literature. Ignoring larger political issues, Dale writes that 'in the first century of the discipline, the two most

influential critical modes [were] idealism and Leavisism.' If this were the case, it would present an extraordinarily provincial Australian literary culture, a categorisation she is anxious to refute. She deals with Leavisism at some length, though without ever situating it ideologically. Leavis's critical project appeared to be anti-establishment in its opposition to the historical and literary-historical norms of Oxbridge English but, after a brief, early sociological phase, it became firmly anti-Marxist. Hence its utility to institutions like the British Council, and its promulgation in the Commonwealth. It absorbed oppositional energies while keeping them firmly away from radical politics. Its contradictions and bankruptcy finally emerged during the opposition to the Vietnam War; but the intellectual crisis of that period, so traumatic and invigorating to the universities, receives no mention in this study.
(Labour History, 76, 1999)

Journal of an Era: Notes from the Red Letter Days, by Jack Beasley (Earlwood, NSW: Wedgetail Press, 1988).

Jack Beasley's *Journal of an Era: Notes from the Red Letter Days* is a companion volume to his earlier *Red Letter Days: Notes from Inside an Era (*Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1979). Red Letter Days is an invaluable account of Australian writing and publishing associated with the Communist Party; the era evoked was the 1950s through the 1970s, and the book comprised five substantial discussions: Alan Marshall, Frank Hardy, Judah Waten, the Australasian Book Society, Zhdanovism, and Socialist Realism and the Communist Party of Australia. *Journal of an Era* supplements *Red Letter Days* by collecting twelve essays first written in the 1950s and 1960s, together with some 1980s contextualising comment. The most substantial of these essays, 'Socialism and the Novel' was published privately by the author in 1957. A pioneering attempt at a comprehensive survey of socialism and Australian fiction, it was for years the only document of its kind: indeed, what is there that has replaced it? It is good to have this at last available in a more durable and accessible form; for years it was hard to come by. Of the other essays here, six are reprinted from the *Communist Review*, two from *Realist Writer* and one from *Tribune*. They offer important contributions to the debate within communist circles over Henry Lawson, Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory*, working class literature, and Patrick White.

These essays represent a basic position in Australian literary culture — and none the less basic for its rarely being given explicit articulation within Australian literary studies. Yet it is of significance not

only in itself, but also as the often unnamed and absent position against which the dominant accounts of Australian literature have defined themselves. The 1952 essay here on Henry Lawson, like those earlier pieces on Lawson in the *Communist Review* by Hilton Barton, stress the politically committed Lawson, a Lawson whose writing was purposeful, militant.

> In his short stories he wrote with great understanding of the life of the working people, the farmers and selectors. His characters and settings are typical and truly Australian, they are a mirror of his time. But, K.S. Prichard points out, it is in Lawson's poems that we find his finest work. In the best of his poems he not merely describes but stands as a warrior, blazing a path for our class to follow.

It was in opposition to this sort of thing that the Cold War ‘New Critical approach to Lawson was developed and promoted, leaving us with a Lawson whose strength was not to be found in the poetry and not to be found in the politically programmatic. Indeed, the less 'political' he was, the better he was, ran the reactive account of Lawson. On Patrick White, similarly, Jack Beasley takes a political response that has generally been sidestepped in critical discussion. He notes, 1962, of *Riders in the Chariot*:

> The mock crucifixion of the old Jew is performed by a group of workers, not one of whom makes a protest. It could be imagined that such scenes are commonplace in factory life. To cap it all the victim is given a lecture on 'mateship' after being cut down by the foreman. 'No man is better than another' , Ernie Theobalds, 'as good a mate as a man might expect' , tells the dying man. Just the boys having fun he is told in a 'kind a reasonable speech. ' They finish the job by burning his house down.
> There is nothing accidental in the choice of workers as the perpetrators of this outrage, the people who spit on Himmelfarb, pelt him with oranges and 'titter at the burlesque.'
> It is White's moment of truth, the ultimate in his literary transmutation of ideology. The obscene jest must carry its mockery of some of the finest elements of our literary tradition. And the workers must be the vehicle of the outrage because White, the ideologue of decay in our society, takes a compulsive stand against those who stand for the future, for optimism, for life.

In a slightly earlier piece, 1959, on the award of the Miles Franklin prize to Randolph Stow's *To the Islands*, he looks at

> the conflict within intellectuals such as White and Stow who are closely bound to the capitalist class.
> Neither has accepted the debased standards of the literary market, the field. Of the writers of detective fiction, phoney war experiences, disguised and undisguised pornography.
> Their problem is to reconcile their ideological affinity to the bourgeoisie with a world in which the actions of the bourgeoisie can no longer inspire real art.

He concludes with a suggestive reading of White and Stow's fiction:

> Voss and Heriot are nothing more than the bourgeois intellectuals, or more correctly a personification of the crisis of the intellectuals, desperately reaching for a sanctuary. They feel the sands shifting beneath them but are still unable because of their individualism to accept the new ideas that are emerging.
> 'We're all lost here,' says old Heriot, and this seems to sum up their position.

Journal of an Era is an important collection for any account of Australian writing. It is only when a collection like this is assembled that we can fully perceive the concealed politics of the established critical positions. Together with Jack Lindsay's *Decay and Renewal* and Katharine Susannah Prichard's *Straight Left*, Beasley's volume contributes to the provision of an accessible record of the varieties of Marxist critical response to Australian writing. And, as John Docker stresses in his introduction.

> The first thing I learnt, reading Beasley's essays, was that Communist Party criticism was not one thing, was not unified and unanimous and homogenous. There was — obviously, now I was reading it, — a variety of competing approaches.

The collecting of these scattered essays into volume form is an important activity; it is creative publishing and there is need for more of it. Both scholarly and commercial publishers are strangely fearful of publishing collections of individual essays. They put forward dubious distinctions

between 'books' and 'essay collections', as if readers only looked for the sustained full length study. Yet in the practice of reading who picks up a work of literary criticism or scholarship and reads it right through as the White Rabbit ordered, start at the beginning and go on till you come to the end, then stop? The tendency is to pick at a section here, a chapter there, to consult and to browse. The work of making such collections is currently falling to the small presses; Jack Beasley's collection is followed from Primavera Press with a collection of Patrick White's essays and polemics. It is to be hoped that libraries and scholars make the effort to obtain these comparatively fugitive publications, and that other editors and publishers are encouraged to assemble such fascinating and important documents.
(*Australian Literary Studies*, 14, 1989)

A Random House: the parlous state of Australian publishing (1975)

By the end of 1974, some $2,520,000 had been allocated in grants to writers and subsidies to publishers by the new Literature Board of the Australian Council for the Arts in its first two years of operation. This injection of finance can be seen as part of the Labor Government's 'new nationalism', supporting Australian creative products. Paradoxically, the dominant impulse in the new writing in Australia now is an internationalist one. The nationalist period, the consciously 'write Australian' period

with its preoccupation with defining the nature of 'Australian life', belongs to a past era; it is preserved in some of the literary prizes, the Miles Franklin award for a novel 'which necessarily presents Australian life in any of its phases', and the award established in 1974 by the Melbourne *Age* for a work that 'best expresses the Australian identity.' But the younger writers are concerned with being writers, with creating verbal artefacts, with relating to other writers, in California and Argentina and Europe and New York and Asia.

The contradictions lie deeper however than this opposition of a nationalist political platform and an internationalist writing movement. The control of book publishing and distributing in Australia is international — despite the Labor party's nationalism; and the internationalist Australian writers are not getting adequate exposure or distribution either in Australia or internationally.

Australia is a very profitable book market; consequently Australian publishing has become dominated by foreign-owned companies. Most of the major UK publishers have branches in Australia — Collins, Nelson, Macmillan, Pergamon, Oxford University Press, Hamlyn, Heinemann, Hodder & Stoughton, Hutchinson, Longman, Penguin and Pitman are all here. And the once Australian companies—now owned by UK interests—include Hicks Smith (Associated Book Publishers), Cheshire (Rank-Xerox), Sun Books (Macmillan) and Jacaranda, Lansdowne and Ure Smith (all part of the IPC – Reed conglomerate). USA publishers have a smaller hold on the market, but it has been a noticeably expanding hold in the last ten years, and if the traditional market agreement (by which UK publishers control 'Commonwealth' rights of books) breaks down, American publishers will move in further. The major companies currently here are McGraw-Hill, John Wiley, Prentice-Hall, Cassell-Collier-Macmillan (now controlling ex-UK owned Cassell), Golden Press, and Holt Rinehart and Winston.

The function of all these companies is to market the overseas product. The profit goes straight back home. They also operate local publishing offices to mop up areas of the market that British or American initiated programmes have missed. This involves particularly the education market, in which they produce material for the local syllabuses; gift style books on kangaroos and so on; and some nominal 'literary' publishing.

It is important to stress how nominal this literary publishing is. Literature Board subsidisation has encouraged expansion in this area, but the nature of the operation hasn't changed. Writers justifiably unhappy about the inadequacy of local publishing companies are likely at first to feel that these international companies offer greater distribution, greater sales, international exposure and international status. This is not the case. These are purely local publishing ventures, initiated by the local branch; very rarely do any of the titles initiated here get taken up by the London office of the company and marketed in the UK To be published by

Penguin in Australia or Macmillan in Australia does not mean that the book will appear anywhere else than in Australia. The odd one may. The majority don't. The writer may well believe there is little point publishing with an Australian-owned company that has no distribution in the UK or USA — particularly since UK publishers will not take on a book already published in Australia, except in rare circumstances. (Australian sales are crucial to the UK publishers, who cannot survive on sales in the UK and Commonwealth if Australian rights are not included). But the local branch of the overseas company offers no better a deal.

The UK and USA publishers in Australia are taking out large profits and not reinvesting them to establish a strong Australian publishing industry. Their offices here are predominantly run by executives and editors from the UK and USA—who have little awareness of or sensitivity for the Australian literary scene. The interests they serve are not those of Australia, but those of the UK or the USA.

What Australian companies are left ? Five university presses, of which only Queensland has a significant literary programme. Horwitz (mainly pulp paperbacks); Rigby; Angus & Robertson. When Collins, the UK publishers, decided to sell out their holding in A&R they gave the A&R board time to find a new investor, so that the company wouldn't fall into foreign — i.e. American — hands. It fell into the hands of Australian capitalist Gordon Barton, who proceeded to dismember it, realising the real estate assets, selling off the map and printing divisions, rationalising the organisation (which meant dispensing with most of the editorial and production staff) — and selling the big education division to the American company McGraw=Hill.

The rest of the Australian scene consists of a number of small companies such as Wren, Lloyd O'Neil, Outback, Hawthorn, Wentworth, Edwards & Shaw — some of them primarily printers with small publishing division; a handful of small presses on the USA model — South Head, Wild & Woolley; and the subscription membership based Australasian Book Society. The directory of the Australian Book Publishing Association lists various other companies, but they are not generally literary houses — and those other literary houses that exist are in very limited production. It is not in the interests of the big corporations that any big Australian publisher should survive. The past pattern of takeovers demonstrates that clearly enough.

The disadvantages of the Australian publisher in terms of capital, reserves and financial resources, when put against the foreign companies, is frightening for anyone concerned about the independence of Australia's print culture. The problems of overseas representation are notorious — only A&R has a London branch now. But absurdly, internal distribution within Australia is equally difficult, and in comparison with the foreign corporation, disadvantageous for the local companies. One of the small Australian companies can afford full time nation-wide sales and promotions staff; without the volume of titles an overseas publisher brings in, most Australian publishers cannot support a big distribution organisation. So they have to turn to book distributors.

The major book distributors in Australia are Gordon & Gotch (UK owned); Book Wholesale (70-75% owned by Nelson, UK) ; Collins-Forlib and Leuteneggers (now integrated into one operation owned by Collins, UK); Hicks Smith (Associated Book, UK); Prentice-Hall (USA) . These are the major distributors who handle books published by Australian companies. Most of the UK and USA companies listed earlier also distribute, and may occasionally represent, an Australian publisher. There are also some smaller distributors — but for one single, nation-wide operation, those are the major companies.

Thus there has come about a two-pronged foreign control of the Australian publishing industry. The effect of the establishment of branches by overseas interests, together with the takeover of local publishing companies, has been exacerbated by the takeover of Australian-owned distributors and the establishment of further distribution outlets by the same foreign interests.

The Australian film industry was killed by the American takeover of distribution and exhibition in the 1920s, which put the local production companies out of business so that the Hollywood product could dominate the market. In 1974 Australia — with not one of the world's largest populations — was America's second most lucrative film market. Independent local film makers now fill less than 1% of the local film market. The film situation is well known — though nothing has yet been done to legislate about it. The book publishing situation is the same. How can Australian books published by Australian-owned companies be distributed properly and effectively when the distributors are overseas owned, and when their prime concern is to sell the imported product? Something has to be at the bottom of the list — and it isn't the imported book.

In terms of *publishing* books, the new subsidy scheme of the Literature Board is offering some help; Australian publishers need capital. The Board won't provide that. But in lieu of capital, subsidisation helps finances. Of the subsidised books 'produced or soon to be produced' from 1973 to the end of 1974, 24 came from foreign owned companies, 67 from locally owned companies.

However the scheme, like any subsidisation scheme, has created new problems in the areas in which it has tried to solve problems. The Board sees one function of the subsidy as keeping down retail costs of Australian books — so they will be cheaper, more accessible; however the bookseller's profit and the author's royalty suffer from this pegging of the retail cost on subsidised books (various formulae are applied to control the cost). A book that might have retailed at $8.50 may appear with a subsidy at $4.50; so the author earns 45 cents a copy instead of 85 cents a copy. The bookseller similarly operates on a percentage basis. You have to sell a lot more books to make up the discrepancy in earnings. The board now requires a 12% royalty to be paid on subsidised books to try and remedy the situation: and it requires a 40% discount to the bookseller, instead of the old 33-35% discount; but 40% had been becoming standard—so now the booksellers are talking of

asking for 45% discount on subsidised books. All this, of course, closes in on the publisher's room to manoeuvre. And a publisher is now unlikely to bring out an unsubsidised literary work since it will have to retail at something like $8.50 in competition with subsidised books retailing at $4-$5.50. The board's belief that lower prices on subsidised books will mean bigger sales is reflected in their policy of not subsidising a reprint, but of encouraging runs of over 2,500 with a printing subsidy. Consequently, when a subsidised title sells out the publisher often cannot afford to reprint it, since the unsubsidised reprint will have to retail at a far higher price than the original edition — an absurdity that the book buyer and the bookseller will not tolerate. Those are contradictions within the detailed application of the subsidy scheme. There are bigger issues, however, that have not been considered at all.

There is a strong case that companies not 51% or more Australian-owned should not receive subsidisation. This was the model followed in Canada in an attempt to resist the USA domination of the book trade there, in trying to rebuild the devastated local industry. There is also a more immediate problem arising from the scheme's progress so far. What is the point of publishing books when nothing is done about the distribution set-up? The situation is analogous with the film industry again — where money has been spent through the Experimental Film Fund and the Australian Film Development Corporation to produce films, only to find that distribution and exhibition are still foreign-controlled and geared to Importing the products of the foreign owners.

The need in cinema, in recorded music, in books, is for Australian-owned and controlled distribution operations. Until these are established, the Australian writer, musician and film-maker are never going to have fair treatment; the Australian public is never going to get fair treatment. Australian rock music received almost no radio air time until 2JJ began broadcasting in Sydney in 1975; the commercial stations ran predominantly mainline commercial imported material. 2JJ's programming has been to broadcast overseas album tracks rather than top 40 singles; and local album tracks. Until the A.B.C. established the station, those interests (i.e. local rock and international rock that wasn't narrowly mainstream commercial) were not catered for. There is a close analogy with the book trade here. The imported books that dominate the trade are the mainline commercial products of the big corporations. It's good that they are available. But the Australian reader is being denied proper distribution of both local material and international works from small presses — alternative writing, *avant garde* writing, underground writing. Similarly in the movies, the local product and the international experimental and avant-garde are not being exhibited. Everyone suffers from this partial, this selective diet. Not just the consumer, but the creator, too, who is isolated from new areas of creativity internationally.

The answer to the problem is not quotas and tariffs. The big UK and USA publishers are publishing material that we want to read, and it would be absurd to suggest curtailing their operations. The ALP's new media policy of insisting on 75% local content on television will simply exclude the international material that we want to see. Instead of stopping the imported material, we need to see the local built up adequately capitalised, rather than left to reply on *ad hoc* subsidisation. 2JJ has succeeded by creating a positive alternative — not by the restriction of the 2SM and 2UW programmes with quotas, tariffs, and so on. Strengthening the Australian product does not necessitate establishing a narrow nationalism that exclude the foreign. It means providing the locally owned and controlled media outlets for the local product, so that it can co-exist and compete with the international and imported. The argument for spending $1.3 million on 'Blue Poles' and $646,000 on 'Woman V' was that Australian painters and public should not continue to be isolated from the major modern artistic achievements, but should have direct access to them — and that this was a necessary part of creating a context for Australian artists to work in. It is a valid argument, and it applies equally to the other arts. It is important that Australian writers should have ready access to the best avant garde writing; it is vital that Australian writers should co-exist in print with international writers: it would be disastrous if Australian writing were subsidised in a totally insular, isolationist context. This isn't happening, but the restrictive aspect of the 'new nationalism' needs to be watched. Mutterings that subsidies should go only to those journals with fully Australian content are always around; but if that happened, it would isolate Australia from the international community of letters that Australian writers are at last becoming part of. If we could achieve a situation whereby major international writers chose to publish their new works in Australian journals and with Australian publishers, because those journals and those publisher stood for the standards that those writers valued, then we would have achieved an internationalism of which we could be nationalistically proud. We don't want to build up a wattle wall around our literature and publication media.

In the USA, The Book People organisation of San Francisco developed to distribute and represent the multitude of American small presses. It now sells American small press publications throughout the world. A comparable distribution organisation in Australia, set up to handle the distribution of books published by Australian publishers, and to import works from the international small presses that have no commercial representation here, is essential for the health of writing and reading — in Australia. Until something like that is established, we will carry on floundering in this mass of contradictions; a political party expounding nationalism but allowing its educational and artistic resources to be dependent on international corporations, and the profits made from them taken out of the country; and a writing that increasingly proclaims an

internationalism, but whose practitioners cannot normally see the significant international writing, and whose own works are not available internationally or nationally.

Meanjin, XXXIV (1975).

Welcome to the Brave New World of Publishing (2001)

I often worry that I have been excessive. I hear myself discussing the plight of authors or the nature of the book trade or the international situation and I think, can it really be as bad as that? I look at what I have written and I wonder, isn't that perhaps a little extreme? And then I read something or hear something and I find that far from being extreme, I have understated the enormity of the situation. So there I am, amazed at my own moderation yet again.

I felt this after writing ‘How popular is popular?’ Have I gone over the top this time? And then I read an extraordinary article called ‘Cooking the Books’ in *The Spectator* of 20 October, 2001. It was a pseudonymous article since the author works in publishing. Its subject was the new practice of endorsements in British bookshops, and what these endorsements actually mean.

Do the endorsements mean that the books are truly popular or best-sellers? Possibly. But what they really mean is money. Money spent by the publishers in order to get the endorsements. W.H. Smiths, the leading book chain in the UK and at one point owners of Hodder Headline publishers, had a category called ‘Read of the Week.’ To have a book called ‘Read of the Week’ costs £10,000 sterling (around $A30,000 at current exchange rates). Another chain, Books etc, has a category called ‘Showcase’ which costs £2,500 (around $7,500). Borders, the USA chain now operating in the UK and Australia, charges a similar amount for its ‘Best’ category. To achieve Amazon’s endorsement of ‘Book of the Month’ costs £6,000 ($18,000). To have a book called ‘Latest Thing’ costs £15,000 ($45,000). ‘Fresh Talent’ is somewhat cheaper, at £2,850 ($7,550).

In 'On Prizes and Awards’, *Newswrite,* 108 (September 2001, reprinted in my *Wild About Books,* I held forth about prizes. I was a bit worried about that piece, too. But that same *Spectator* article offered some further interesting information on the dubious nature of prizes. Take the W.H. Smith Award for an author whose book ‘makes the most significant contribution to literature.’ It has been a distinguished award, with a long history (Patrick White once won it); this year the panel of judges was dispensed with, and the winner is now decided by ‘the public.’ Given the problems with panels of judges, this sounds all right, but in order for book to be entered for the award, it appears that the publisher has to pay what the *Spectator* article calls ‘a significant amount of money.’ Similarly with W.H. Smith’s ‘Thumping Good Read’ prize, decided by a panel of customers. The prize is worth £5,000 ($15,000), and it costs £2,500 ($7,500) for a book to be considered.

And then there is the issue of display space. I quote the *Spectator* again. ‘Three-month slots in front-of-store shelves can be sold for up to £13,000 [$39,000]. Most retailers also charge a fee for inclusion in their Christmas catalogues. Getting books into a prominent position in shops now costs more than the typical advance to a first-time novelist.’

It couldn’t happen here, of course. Or could it? I remember fifteen years ago Brian Johns telling me how when he first went to Penguin Australia as publisher he began to inquire about why the books he published were not in the airport bookstalls. He discovered to his horror that getting the books into certain stores involved a cash payment. But what in those days he called a bribe, and what the *Spectator* billed on its cover as ‘Bookshop Bribery’ has now become established institutional practice. A frequent-flying businessman friend of mine recently attempted to get the books he had written into his local airport lounge book outlet.

‘Can’t do,’ he was told. The shelf space, it was explained, was bought by the supplier - the publisher or distributor. He asked how much it would cost. ‘Forget it,’ he was told, ‘you wouldn’t be able to afford it.’ This, of course, is becoming standard practice with supermarkets, where the shelf space is purchased by the product manufacturer. And in strictly commercial terms, there is no reason why books should be treated as a different commodity from breakfast serials or soap powder.

What it means, of course, is that the rich get richer and the rest sink or swim, as with so much else in our brave new world. The publishers’ promotional budgets go into promoting books that, hopefully, will get massive sales, and there is nothing left over for the others. Indeed the others, the mid-list literary titles, the books of specialised or minority interest, have less and less chance of being published. And the small presses and self-publishers have little chance of getting bookshop displays or endorsements. They cannot afford them.

Of course, it is not all totally bad. These are tendencies, not totalities. I was pleased to read in Michael Webster’s letter to *Newswrite*, November 2001, that the new BookTrack best seller lists are above suspicion. Nonetheless, if a publisher can afford to outlay $39,000 for a three-month front of store display, then the book displayed is likely to make the best-seller lists: otherwise why outlay $39,000? Money speaks. Or swears, as Bob Dylan put it. Popularity can be bought. And the problem is, not that certain books get massive sales, but that other books are displaced from display, from attention, and ultimately from publication.

As for the figure of 30-60% returns of unsold books, I was given this by senior figures within the book trade. Obviously it could not apply to all titles published, otherwise the industry would indeed be in a sorry way. If the figure for books returned is now around 20%, as Michael Webster writes, that perhaps suggests that certain sorts of books are no longer being published or that certain sorts of books have smaller print runs. And I would not want to underestimate the difficult nature of the industry. With so many books in print, it is hard for everyone. The automobile industry has a return of less than one per cent of its product. Twenty per cent would be unthinkable.

Newswrite, 111 (December 2001).

Australian Publishing in its International Context (1999)

Australian publishing has always been dominated by foreign interests, but the concentration of foreign ownership has surely never been higher than today. At various times Australian owned publishers have been established, but one by one they have been acquired by larger, overseas organisations that have no particular local allegiances. Angus & Robertson and Bay Books were acquired by HarperCollins; McPhee Gribble was acquired by Penguin and F.W. Cheshire by Longman, both part of the Pearson group; Jacaranda was acquired by Wiley; Sun Books was acquired by Macmillan; D.W. Thorpe and Rigby were acquired by Reed; Craftsman

House and Paper Bark were acquired by Gordon and Breach; and Kangaroo Press was acquired by Simon and Schuster. Most of the other independent publishers active in the 1970s and 1980s have now closed down, been taken over and absorbed, or effectively ceased literary publishing - ANZ books, Australasian Book Society, Alternative Publishing Co-operative, E.J. Dwyer, John Ferguson, Goldstar, Outback Press, Greenhouse, Ure Smith, Second Back Row Press, Left Book Club, Wentworth Press, Wild & Woolley, Widescope, Wren. A.N.U Press, La Trobe University Press and Sydney University Press have all closed down. A handful of local operations involved in literary or scholarly publishing survives, notably University of Queensland Press, Text, Hale & Iremonger, and Hyland House. There are some with specialist programmes, like Currency Press (drama) and Spinifex and Sybylla Feminist Press (feminist and women's writing), or with strong regional connections, like Fremantle Arts Centre Press in West Australia and Wakefield Press in South Australia. Allen & Unwin mutated into an Australian company after a management buy out when HarperCollins acquired the parent British operation. New houses have appeared - Brandl and Schlesinger, Duffy and Snelgrove, Abbott Bentley. And there is a scattering of small presses. But the major part of Australian publishing is done by the local branches of the big transnational corporations.

From the 1970s onwards there has been some governmental support for publishing from the Australia Council's Literature Board (now Literature Fund). But a quarter of a century of funding has failed to establish a healthy, independent local industry. Consistently the Literature Board refused to do anything about distribution. At a point when independent distributors were being absorbed by transnational publishers and when new small and independent presses could find no access to efficient distribution, the literature board did nothing. It held inquiries, but offered no support. Publication subsidies were dispensed, publicity money splashed around, but a national distribution policy for all that funded writing was never drawn up. Moreover, the Literature Board always insisted on giving money readily to transnational publishers - unlike the Canada Council which restricted funds to Canadian companies. In Canada today there is a thriving publishing industry of independent publishers, together with a host of dynamic small presses. But Australian governmental policy seemed to be one of collaboration with the transnationals rather than of trying to confront or mitigate their destructive effects.

In order to understand the current state of the industry within Australia, it is necessary to look at developments in publishing in the USA, Britain and Europe. The decisions affecting the future of Australian publishing are taken elsewhere. The publishing industry, like all late capitalist enterprises, is in its global phase. Robert Maxwell, the media magnate who robbed his employees' pension fund and then apparently fell, or was pushed, off the back of his yacht, gave a television interview a decade and more ago in which he

mentioned that he was one of ten candidates for operating a global media empire. The word ‘candidate’ was interesting. Who had drawn up the short list? What banks or money lenders or think-tanks had decided on the number of ten? But he was clearly, on this occasion at least, speaking the truth. The publishing industry is now ‘rationalising’ itself into such a structure through a series of take-overs and mergers.

The most dramatic recent stage in the process began some five or so years ago when Reed-Elsevier, one of the largest international publishing conglomerates which was formed by the merger of the British group Reed and the Dutch group Elsevier, announced that they were putting up for sale their so called consumer books division. They were retaining their business, legal, medical and information divisions: but the consumer books division had not been delivering adequate profits. The problem, they announced, was a combination of small print runs and a poor retail market in England and Australia. Consumer books are general books, the books you see in the bookshop, including literature, fiction, biography and poetry, the books we read. In this particular case they no longer had a poetry list; a few years earlier they had reneged on their existing poetry contracts, saying that poetry was not making sufficient money.

Literature was no longer deemed profitable enough for a major conglomerate to be bothered with. The problem is, the conglomerates have knocked out all the literary publishers by acquiring and destroying them, so who will continue to publish literature ?

Now Reed-Elsevier may not be a name on the tip of everyone’s tongue. It was formed by a merger of the Dutch Elsevier and the British Reed groups. Reed had developed its book publishing division from the Odhams and Newnes divisions of Britain’s magazine publisher IPC, later acquiring ownership of some of the premier British publishing houses, once independent operators already absorbed into Paul Hamlyn’s Octopus group. Imprints included William Heinemann, Methuen, Secker & Warburg, Sinclair-Stevenson, and the paperback Minerva and Mandarin lists.

Heinemann, Secker & Warburg and the recently founded Sinclair-Stevenson were distinguished literary imprints. In the extraordinary spate of acquisitions, mergers and amalgamations of the 1980s, publisher after publisher was swallowed by corporate giants like Reed. The significant factor about Reed’s decision to sell its consumer books division was that no one seemed to want it. It languished on the market for eighteen months. Finally it was acquired by the American Newhouse group that already owned the *New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair* and the publishing imprints of Random House, Vintage, Knopf, Ballantine, Del Rey, Fawcett, Fodor Travel Guides, Pantheon, Villard and Crown in the United States and Jonathan Cape, Chatto & Windus, Hogarth Press, The Bodley Head, Century Hutchinson, Arrow, Barrie and Jenkins, Pimlico, Stanley Paul, Rider and Ebury Press in the United Kingdom. The acquisition had barely been completed when Newhouse sold its book

publishing division to the huge German conglomerate Bertelsmann, which owns Transworld, Corgi, Black Swan, Doubleday, Dell, Anchor, Bantam, Broadway Books, Delacorte and a dozen book clubs, including the Book Club and the Literary Guild. Amongst other interests Bertelsmann has a music division and record clubs, owns three television networks in Germany, and is partner in one of the largest on-line services in Europe. The Random House-Reed consumer books-Bertelsmann operation now publishes 23 per cent of trade books in the USA according to *Time* magazine, 6 April 1998.

Massive corporate takeover and amalgamation has been the pattern of the publishing industry over the last three decades. Occasionally there are divestments as the groups concentrate on their core assets - so Reed disposed of its consumer list and News Limited of its educational list and of Harvill Press.. The situation is never in a final state. Apart from the Bertelsmann group, the other major transnational publishers involved in literary publishing in Australia are Pearsons, News Limited, and the Von Holzbrinck group. Others also present include Simon and Schuster (a division of Viacom, and whose imprints include Aladdin and Atheneum), Harcourt Brace (whose imprints include Academic Press, Dryden Press, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, W.B. Saunders, Churchill Livingstone, and Bailliere Tindall), and Hodder Headline (whose imprints include Hodder and Stoughton, New English Library, Sceptre, Teach Yourself Library, Edward Arnold, Piatkus, Lion and Headline) are also present.

Pearsons, owners of the merchant bank Lazards, the *Financial Times* and *Investors Chronicle*, and the television production companies Thames and Grundy, have moved from their publishing base of Longman to acquire a huge book division. Their imprints and acquired companies include Viking, Penguin, Pelican, Puffin, Allen Lane, Signet, New American Library, Dutton, Dial, Riverhead, Philomel, Tarcher, Grossett group, Ace, Boulevard, Rough Guides, Hamish Hamilton, Michael Joseph, Ladybird, Frederick Warne, McPhee Gribble, Putnam-Berkeley, Pitman, Oliver and Boyd, Addison-Wesley and Simon and Schuster's educational and reference book division, the latter already having absorbed Prentice Hall, Harvester-Wheatsheaf, G. K. Hall, and Twayne amongst others. Murdoch's News Limited over the last two decades has acquired, absorbed and merged Granada - the old Panther and Paladin lists - Harper, Basic Books, Times Books, Collins, Fontana, Flamingo, Allen & Unwin UK, Thorsons, Aquarian, Golden Press, Bay Books and Angus & Robertson. But HarperCollins is only a small, and unprofitable, division of News Limited, whose other interests include *The Australian, The Daily Telegraph, the Adelaide Advertiser, the Courier Mail*, and the Herald and Weekly Times group in Australia, *The Times, Sunday Times, Sun, News of the World, Times Literary Supplement, Educational Supplement* and *Higher Educational Supplement* in the UK, the Fox television network in the USA, the global satellite television network Sky, and Twentieth Century Fox film studios. The German family

group Von Holzbrinck now controls Macmillan, Pan, Picador, Sidgwick and Jackson, St Martin's Press, Henry Holt, and Farrar, Strauss Giroux. Reed-Elsevier's directories and business, educational, medical and legal publishing also operates in Australia, with Butterworth, Hamlyn, Conran Octopus, Mitchell Beazley, Rigby, Heinemann, Evans Brothers, Pergamon, Newnes, Bowker, Whitaker, Hans Zell, Marquis Who's Who, and D. W. Thorpe amongst its acquired imprints.

These lists of once independent companies, now acquired by, merged into and absorbed by a handful of conglomerates, tell their own story. The simple point to be made is that there are hardly any traditional independent publishers left. And the number of publishing groups gets fewer and fewer. One of the consequence of this is that decisions are everywhere now made on an accountancy model. The conglomerates are run on the model of transnational conglomerates everywhere. The priority is making a consistent profit. Most media corporations expect to make profits of at least fifteen to twenty per cent; but whereas newspapers, magazines, music and broadcasting produce these returns, publishing profits have tended to be around the ten per cent mark (Ken Auletta, 'The Impossible Business', *New Yorker*, October 6, 1997, 54). The pressure to increase this is considerable. When the take-overs have been financed by borrowing money, the pressure is extreme.

As a consequence the publisher's sales department now has more power than the editorial department in an editorial meeting. Instead of a worthwhile product being published which the sales department are then instructed to sell, the sales department now demands a product that is first of all 'saleable' -its saleability is more important than whether it is of any value to anyone. This is the situation William Morris analysed in Victorian England, when industrial products were produced not for any use, but because they could be manufactured easily and sold easily to make a profit.

'How could they possibly attend to such trifles as the quality of the wares they sold ? The best of them were of a lowish average, the worst were transparent make-shifts for the things asked for which nobody would have put up with if they could have got anything else. It was a current jest of the time that the wares were made to sell and not to use.' (*News from Nowhere,* ch 15.)

Now there is nothing wrong with selling books. It is something some of the best literary publishers were not always terribly good at. One of the strategies the conglomerates have developed is opening up new markets, selling in department stores and chain stores and drug stores and anywhere else where stock could be deposited. At first sight this looks a positive move, more sales through additional outlets. But these outlets are suitable for only a certain range of middle of the road mass market product. When these titles sell well in the chain stores, they become proportionately more important on the publishers' lists, since they achieve more

sales. In the end the product that can be sold through the mass market shopping mall outlets begins to dictate editorial selection.

Another recent development is the way in which now the costs of warehousing a book are minutely calculated, so that if a title is not selling continuously, if it is perceived to be earning less money from sales than it costs to warehouse it, the title is remaindered or pulped. Publishers can no longer write off the costs of warehouse inventory against tax. The decisions are all cash decisions. No other value than cash is acknowledged. Now this may be a valid way of running the entertainment industry. The immediate consequence in publishing is that books now have a harder time staying in print. The back-list is becoming a thing of the past. The effect of this is apparent in setting texts for Australian literature courses; fewer and fewer of once standard titles remain in print. New titles are liable to vanish altogether within eighteen months of publication.

The problem is that the traditional, literary publishers have almost all been acquired by transnational conglomerates. The traditional values of literary publishing have been abandoned. Literary quality and value are no longer relevant terms. Again, this would not be a problem if this was a policy followed only by the conglomerates. But what the conglomerates have done is acquire the literary publishers, and then either close down or vastly reduce the traditional literary lists. When a conglomerate acquires a dozen or a couple of dozen imprints, there is inevitably rationalization. Not all those imprints will continue to operate as before, producing the same range of titles. Inevitably, editorial staff are shed, some imprints are dropped and the total range and diversity of titles is reduced.

In the past it used to be possible, when a publisher was acquired in a take over, for the managerial and editorial staff to go off and set up a new operation. To do that effectively now is much more difficult. The cost of entering the industry, in order to survive amidst the financial giants, is huge, effectively discouraging new players. The further problem is that distribution is now under the control of the handful of conglomerates. There is no major, national independent distribution organisation in Australia that will provide an adequate service for an independent publisher.

To add to the problems, book shop retailing has similarly moved in the direction of the conglomerates. Worse than that, it is in a state of financial instability. A couple of years ago one of the larger British bookshop chains, Pentos, which owned Dillons Bookshops, went into receivership. For a while it seemed that there would be only one major UK chain, the W.H.Smith group, which controlled Sherrard and Hughes and Waterstones. Waterstones, set up with governmental assistance to provide an alternative to W.H. Smith, had later been acquired by W.H. Smith. Then in 1998 after W.H. Smith recorded bad trading results and decided to

retreat to its original core newsgency businesses, it was announced that Tim Waterstone was to invest in a new company to buy back the 104 Waterstone shops; his biggest shareholders were to be an American venture capital group, Advent Intrnational, and the music group EMI, which was selling its HMV, Dillons and Hatchards stores to the new company.

In the United States, the retail market is dominated by two chains, B. Dalton and Waldenbooks. In Australia the major chains are Collins Book Depot, Dymocks and the American owned Angus & Robertson-Bookworld. The latter two both operate franchises: independently owned stores operating under the brand name and supplied from the central warehouse. Many of the franchise operators have only limited knowledge of the book trade, so are content to let the group central buyer determine purchases. One way or another, purchasing decisions are now concentrated into a very few hands.

What are the issues here? First of all, when a major group dominates the bookselling retail trade, it can determine what product is purchased and what is not. It holds the power of life or death over a book. Moreover, in commercial terms, it can demand discounts and terms that the publishers cannot refuse. If they refuse, their books do not get displayed. These beneficial terms - better discounts, better sale or return terms and so on - are not available to the independent booksellers.

As a result independent booksellers find it harder to stay in business. In Australia the independents currently comprise about sixteen per cent of the book trade. Some of them are very successful and provide important outlets for the industry. But the typical independent bookseller cannot move the volume of stock that entitles the operation to good terms. Some of the publishing conglomerates are now refusing to supply small independent bookshops that purchase only small amounts of stock. Despite the trumpeted advances of computerisation, the argument is that it is too difficult, too time consuming, too expensive to deal with small accounts.

The same argument is used by the large bookshop chains in dealing with small publishers. They prefer to deal only with the major suppliers. They are not interested in dealing with independent publishers. They do not want lots of small accounts. They prefer to work in close co-operation with the entertainment industry conglomerates, promoting titles according to the showbusiness model. That is, they promote the product that comes with a ready-made publicity campaign orchestrated through newspapers, magazines, and television.

To repeat, this would all be good enough, if quality literature, small run books, serious writing was also allowed its place. But it is in the nature of these massive publishing and retailing conglomerates to exclude the small, independent operators. It is simpler to deal with a limited number of accounts, with a large cash flow to them. This model is readily admitted in the book trade. It is held to be good business practice.

But it would be a mistake to think that it is only a matter of money and profits. It is also a matter of control. There was no financial need for the conglomerates to acquire the small, literary publishers that they acquired. All they have basically done is to close them down. It makes no sense in terms of profitability. But it does make sense in terms of removing the opposition. The nature of the conglomerates, the multi-nationals, big business, is to remove the opposition. Such organisations are not especially efficient in their operation. They are often vastly wasteful of resources. They regularly post vast losses. But they survive by knocking out any opposition.

In theory the mergers and take overs of publishing houses meant larger, more efficient organisations that could effect economies of scale. To some degree this is true. A larger publishing conglomerate can get better printing contracts, better trucking rates, because of the volume of the business it does. But that very volume of business can prove self-defeating. Recently Rupert Murdoch's international publishing organisation, HarperCollins, announced that it was cutting down substantially on the number of titles it published. It had found that it was publishing too many titles to market them efficiently, that it was producing lots of titles but they got inadequate sales. The figure quoted in Australia is that HarperCollins were publishing - from their UK, USA and Australian operations -3,500 titles a year. That is something like ten books every day. This number has now been reduced to 1,200 a year: - that is a mere hundred a month, or twenty five a week.

The HarperCollins experience is not unique. The conglomerates acquire publishing houses with reckless abandon, and then find they are producing too many books to deal with. In order to economise on overheads, they all cut editorial and publicity staff. In house editing becomes rare, proof-reading non-existent. Contract editors are employed. No one has any overall responsibility for a title. There are too many titles for the publicity department to deal with. Having acquired 20 publishing imprints each publishing two hundred titles a year, the conglomerate finds it has too much product. It halves the product. Looked at another way, it has closed down ten of those twenty publishers it acquired. Or looked at another way, it has halved the output of the twenty publishers it acquired, publishing only the easily profitable or obviously marketable. Whatever way you look at it, something is lost. That something tends to be literature, quality, dissent.

The problem, an obvious enough one, is that economies of scale for soap manufacturing or cereal manufacturing, are not readily translatable to book publishing. A soap manufacturer has a limited number of product lines, and keeps on repeating them. But with books, the hundred titles a month are all different, and are followed by a hundred titles the following month, and so on. But who can keep them all in stock ? By the time you find out a book has been published, it is likely to have vanished from the shelves. The way the book trade works is on sale or return. The books are sent out one month, sit in the shop for six weeks and are then

displaced by the next month's product. Of course some are, hopefully, bought; and in some shops they stay on the shelves for two or three months. Displaced, they are packed up and returned to the warehouse.

The sale or return model for the book trade is now entrenched, though widely criticized by authors and publishers alike. In effect, it means the bookseller orders titles at no risk. If the books are not sold, then they are returned. Once returned, they are usually pulped. Some publishers have admitted a figure of sixty per cent returns. Thirty per cent is normative. It is a wasteful system in terms of resources. It also means that quoted sales figures for alleged best sellers can be misleading. The figures denote books sold in to the shops. How many will be bought by the public is something different. Sales figures, like huge advance payments, are now announced as part of the publicity machine, and need some careful interpreting. So called 'best seller' lists are generally compiled from books sold in. If a retail outlet has bought large numbers of a title, there is every incentive to report that the title is a best seller. Indeed, it has been sold in large numbers to the store. Whether the public is buying is another issue. Apart from the waste and inefficiencies inherent in sale or return, there are further problems in the cost structure of book marketing. Of the recommended retail price of a book, the bookshop or newsagent takes 40-47%, the distributor 20-25%, the author 10%. Once printing, production costs and overheads are taken into account, there is not a large margin for the publisher. Hence the pressure to find titles that will have large runs, and consequently a reduced unit cost, so that a profit can be generated.

These problems of contemporary international publishing are all present in Australia. But in Australia there is the further issue that the industry is controlled by foreign interests. There is legislation against foreign control of broadcasting and newspaper interests in Australia; there are no such controls over book publishing. Consequently the shaping of the national literary culture is in the hands of interests that have no commitment to that culture; indeed, it is the nature of transnationals to have no commitment to any national culture, to be concerned only with profit and tax minimisation. News Limited is reported to have paid less than13 per cent tax in 1987, and 7.8 per cent in 1997 (John Pilger, *A Secret Country*, Vintage, London, 1992, 272; Neil Collins and Philip Johnston, 'Some Taxing Questions for Mr Murdoch,' *The Weekly Telegraph*, 342, February 11 - 17, 1998, 27.)

Not that tax minimisation is unique to transnationals. Packer's Consolidated Press holdings, publishers of most of the magazines read in Australia, paid nine cents in the dollar tax in 1989-90 (John Pilger, *A Secret Country*, Vintage, London, 1992, 272).

What used to be the worry of the domination of Australian publishing by British or American corporations, and the imposition of British and American values, has to some degree changed. Those corporations have

mutated into transnationals, still importing alien values, but values that are now increasingly divorced from any national culture.

One of the significant developments of the 1980s, however, has been the way in which these corporations have developed substantial local publishing operations. The days when the local branch only imported books and did no local publishing are past. That is something of an improvement; there are, however, ambiguities. For local writing to be published by the Australian branch of a transnational does not mean that it will have access to an international market. Quite the opposite in most case. The transnationals have their Australian, Indian, Canadian, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong branches. All these cater for their specific local market. They serve to defuse any potential resentments that might be inflamed if the local branches merely imported foreign product and did nothing for the local community. In this the industry self-regulates. There are no governmentally imposed quotas for local production, as with television.

Cynical observers have suggested that the local publishing is only token. The way in which the book from the local book is generally refused access to the UK or USA markets would tend to confirm this. Losses incurred by the local operation can be offset against tax on the huge profits made by the imported product. But much of the local publishing does make money. The issue, of course, is what sort of thing is published locally. These are commercial operations, and what is published is published primarily to make money. The problem for a national culture is that literature is no longer perceived to make money. One by one poetry, literary studies, short story collections and finally literary fiction are dropped from the lists.

In the preceding decades it was received publishing wisdom in Australia that there was no market for local genre writing - crime, romance, science fiction, historical sagas etc - so the local practitioners had few local opportunities. A small amount of local literary work appeared, subsidized by the profits on the imports. Some of this was work of quality, some of it was published for strategic literary and literary-political and political reasons. Now, however, subsidizing is held to be a thing of the past; everything has to make its own way, literary works are perceived as uncommercial, and local genre publishing is now perceived as profitable. This is good news for writers and readers of crime, romance, historical fantasy and so on. But the traditional categories that comprise a literary culture of quality are now seriously under threat.

Australia’s small population means that it is hard to establish a viable publishing industry. Thomas Keneally has speculated that a population of 50 million is needed to provide a large enough market. Imported paperbacks from the UK and USA are printed in runs of 20,000 to 250,000, which results in significantly reduced unit costs. Penguin Australia is said currently to require a minimum print run for a new title of 6,000. In the past a print run of 2,000 had been acceptable. But the discrepancy between what is feasible for a local

book and for a book produced in the UK or USA is huge. Paperbacks are cheaper than hard backs not primarily because of their binding but because of the size of their print runs allowing major unit cost reduction. Such reductions are barely feasible for most Australian publishing. In addition, paper is subject to an import duty in Australia. Printed books are subject to no import duty. In the past there was a governmental book bounty, a subsidy to the Australian book industry to compensate for higher Australian printing costs and the paper duty. This has now been phased out.

Academic and scholarly publishing in Australia is in an especially unhealthy condition. The massive changes in publishing, in Australia and globally, have meant that the general publishers who traditionally published scholarly, academic works, no longer do so. Angus & Robertson used to publish basic works of Australian literary and historical studies. Now they are part of the Murdoch organization publisher HarperCollins, they are focussing on mass market general publishing. HarperCollins' educational division was sold to Longmans, part of the Pearson group. The local Australian branch of Oxford University Press has taken the decision to publish no more in the scholarly monograph area in Australian literature. They are focussing instead on anthologies and dictionaries, encyclopaedias and companions.

One of the causes of the perceived low morale in the Humanities, is the collapse of the traditional scholarly publishing industry. Unlike most scientists, medical researchers and engineers, whose research work normally appears in journals, scholars in the arts have traditionally - for 500 years indeed - issued their findings through books. Because of the mergers and take-overs in publishing in the last twenty years, the traditional general publishers who issued serious, scholarly works, no longer exist. They have been absorbed into media-conglomerates, whose main concerns are mass market sales, and entertainment. The print-runs required for commercial publishing in this media-conglomerate world are larger than scholarly books can achieve. Cuts in public funding to universities and libraries over the last two decades have substantially reduced the size of the market. The typical print run for a scholarly book is now between 250 and 750 copies.

The consequence is that academics working in the humanities who traditionally would have published four or five books, at least, in their working careers, are now beginning to find it difficult to publish at all. This has a negative effect on morale; it offers no reinforcement for on-going work; it marks an imminent death of the arts disciplines.

Australian academics are at an especial disadvantage here, compared with their European or North American peers. Europe still has a tradition of subsidized, scholarly publishing. Numerous specialist publishing houses exist to issue short run, scholarly works. Similarly in the USA, there are large numbers of university presses that are committed to issuing scholarly work. That is not the case in Australia. Of course, it

is open for an Australian academic to publish scholarly work with an overseas academic press. Overseas scholarly presses generally have little interest, however, in the field of Australian literature or Australian studies.

The West congratulates itself on its free press, on its lack of censorship structures. But it does not need them when the controls are already in place with current publishing practices. When censorship was first introduced into Britain some 500 years ago, shortly after the development of printing, the state made a very smart decision. Censorship was not administered by the state, but by the church, whose representatives were to read manuscripts, and by the licensed stationers - the publishers, booksellers and printers - who were to police the controls. It was in the interest of the licensed stationers to detect, inform upon, and put out of business any unlicensed, independent operators - anybody whose business encroached upon their own profits. To put it simply, the licensed operators were in complicity with the state in enforcing censorship. That is still the model.

The new way to have a controlled media is to have a handful of conglomerates dominating the publishing industry. These conglomerates are deeply involved in film, television, newspaper and electronic publishing. In order to operate in these areas, they need to have a good working relationships with national governments. Their managers and figureheads are constantly in communication with national leaders - are regularly photographed with them; and regularly offer them extraordinary publishing contracts for their memoirs or manifestoes. So it is all very simple. Nothing subversive, nothing challenging, nothing questioning the status quo will get through these channels.

If it does get through, by chance, then it is very easy to suppress the item; to pulp it, to lose copies, accidentally to damage stock, or to decide that it is not moving fast enough to remain in print or that it should not go into paperback. All these tricks have been used, and continue to be used. When a small publisher issued an unfavourable biography of Robert Maxwell, Maxwell simply bought up the publishing house and put the offending title out of print. In 1998 Rupert Murdoch personally intervened to cancel the publication of a book by the former British governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten; Patten's comments on China went counter to the interests of News Limited, who were attempting to enter the lucrative Chinese market. The issue produced massive shock, horror and outrage in the non-Murdoch media (Andrew Neil, 'Murdoch diminished by bowing to China,' *Guardian Weekly*, March 8, 1998, 12; Barbie Dutter, Nigel Reynolds, George Jones and Philip Johnston, '"Censorship" furore over Patten book,' *Weekly Telegraph*, 345, March 4-10, 1998; Philip Johnston, 'Times man hits at censor Murdoch,' *Weekly Telegraph*, 346, March 11-17, 1998,10.)

The reaction was somewhat disingenuous. Such managerial political interventions have always been normative in the publishing industry, even if rarely so public: what is the point of running a publishing house

if not to influence public opinion? Mark Miller's *Nation* article lists numerous examples. With the acquisition of independent publishers by the conglomerates, however, this problem of control of information has become much more serious, insofar as there are now far fewer independent outlets. And there are other available control options besides cancelling or suppression; publication of a book in the West does not necessarily mean very much at all. Publication demonstrates a world ostensibly free from censorship - but it is easy enough to decide not to promote a book, to fail to make stock available, to forget to send out review copies, and so on. The West did not win the cold war by having a weaker control system than the Eastern bloc.

It is not the case that things were ideal in the days of the old gentlemen publishers. The category of 'gentlemen' is not beyond question, let alone the integrity of many of those operators. But in the simple fact that there were many publishers, that they were independent of each other, that they were involved primarily in publishing and were not lobbying for licenses for lotteries, television stations, casinos, airlines and so on, meant that they were less locked into governmental controls, less locked into doing deals. Up to a point.

Literary and scholarly publishing in Australia is in crisis. But arguably it always has been in crisis. This article has tended to focus on negative manifestations by way of warning. There is widespread concern about the current situation, and the journal of the Australian Society of Authors, *Australian Author*, has run highly critical articles on HarperCollins by Amanda Hickey and Penguin by Paul Brennan. But if we are aware of some of the problems in the situation, then it will be possible to look for solutions. There have been positive developments. Some of the conglomerate acquisitions have resulted in increased editorial independence for the local branches of the new transnationals; they are no longer required to report back to head office in London for every move. There have been significant developments in electronic publishing, though it would be naive to imagine that this will in the end offer a more open and free network than the existing market. The same handful of operators are already positioning themselves to control that information source. Within the retail book trade, the opening of 'super-stores' has been positive: these large stores require large amounts of stock, and in Australia, as in the USA, they have been willing to take supplies from smaller, independent publishers, and to stock back list titles to fill up the space. Printing developments have made short run publishing more feasible than in the past. A number of specialist niche publishers have emerged, such as Focus, who specialize in company histories and corporate publishing. There has been a growth of educational publishers. There have been developments in scholarly publishing by specialist societies such as the Association for the Study of Australian Literature and the Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture, by academic institutes such as the Power Institute, and by surviving university presses such as Melbourne, New South Wales, Queensland and Central Queensland. There have been notable successes in

self-publishing, which have help removed the absurd stigma attached to it in the past. As established commercial channels become more restrictive, alternative models develop. Most books published never get into bookshops; but there are other networks for their distribution that can be developed- professional associations, direct marketing, conferences, public appearances and readings. When an existing situation is not working efficiently, as is the case with literary and scholarly publishing in Australia, then the necessities and incentives and opportunities for change will inevitably present themselves.

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Remembering

Laurie Hergenhan

In the development of the study and appreciation of Australian literature, Laurie Hergenhan was a central figure for fifty crucial years. Indeed, in many way he was THE central figure. When he began editing *Australian Literary Studies* in 1963 there were only token representations of Australian writing in university

courses. The critical essays, anthologies and editions were all the work of enthusiasts whose primary teaching was in English or American Literature, or amateurs outside the university.

With the establishment of ALS the subject was brought into focus with a professional journal. And with the annual bibliography that appeared in it, it was possible at last to see what was being done in the field. The journal and the bibliography were crucial aids and stimuli, and under Laurie's editorship they became the mainstay of the subject.

This might have been enough for many men and women. But Laurie next came up with the project of anthologies of Australian writing, the Portable Australian Authors, later renamed the Australian Authors series. These volumes soon established themselves as indispensible texts for the developing courses in the subject that were established in the ensuing decades.

Laurie saw his role as one of encouraging and facilitating. Many scholars become extremely possessive of the subjects on which they write. Laurie was quite the opposite. His enthusiasm for Marcus Clarke was one that he shared: he was a constant support and encouragement to me in my own work on Clarke. And at the beginning of this century, when many of us had happily retired, Laurie took up the overseer's whip and dragooned Ken Stewart and me into collaborating with him on editing Cyril Hopkins' long unpublished life of Clarke.

In his enthusiasm for Australian writing Laurie was always expansive. He introduced interviews into ALS alongside critical articles. He introduced crime fiction and science fiction into the range of materials discussed and anthologized. His own particular interests were wide. He edited a pioneering selection of Clarke's journalism, he wrote a study of convict fiction, and a study of the American commentator on Australian writing. C. Hartley Grattan, and he edited a lively selection of Australian short stories. And his enthusiasms were not restricted to the past in the traditional way of academics. He maintained a lively interest in contemporary writing, and was always happy to meet with young writers and scholars, to turn up to book launches and readings, and to have a drink and a talk afterwards.

And his later metamorphosis into a travel writer for the *Courier-Mail* should also be mentioned. It chimed in happily with his amazingly extensive travels in his retirement, to Italy, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Cambodia and elsewhere.

Laurie was an inspiration, a stimulus, a facilitator, an editor, a scholar, a bibliographer and a very good friend. He is deeply missed.

Laurie Hergenhan memorial, 2019

Remembering Laurie Hergenhan

When I was appointed to a lectureship at the University of Sydney in 1963, my acquaintance with Australian literature was minimal. I had read a Rolf Boldrewood novel, picked up in a second hand bookshop. I had probably read Paul Brickhill. But that was about it. Although Gerry Wilkes held the chair of Australian Literature at Sydney, there were no full courses in the subject on the syllabus. A novel of Patrick White's and Kenneth Slessor's poems were fitted in somewhere, but that was about all.

In the development of the academic study and appreciation of Australian literature, Laurie Hergenhan was a central figure for fifty crucial years. Indeed, in many way he was THE central figure. When he began editing *Australian Literary Studies* there were only token representations of Australian writing in university courses. The critical essays, anthologies and editions were all the work of enthusiasts whose primary teaching was in English or American Literature, or amateurs outside the university.

Southerly, founded by Guy Howarth at the University of Sydney in 1939, consistently published critical appraisals of Australian writing, and under G. A. Wilkes' later lengthy editorship provided a solid core of substantial scholarship and evaluation. *Quadrant,* sponsored by the CIA funded Congress for Cultural Freedom and edited by James McAuley, vigorously attempted to rescue Australian writing from the radical nationalists, socialists, communists and other left-wing critics like Jack Lindsay who had been offering some challenging assessments in *Meanjin, Realist Writer,* and *Overland* amongst other publications. But the fears of the imminent collapse of *Southerly* when Kenneth Slessor became editor, after Howarth's departure for South Africa and before Wilkes took over, may have encouraged McAuley in establishing his next project: the establishment at the University of Tasmania in 1963 of the first scholarly journal of Australian literature, *Australian Literary Studies* with Laurie Hergenhan as editor. With the establishment of *ALS* the study of Australian Literature was brought into focus with a fully professional journal. And with the annual bibliography that appeared in it, it was possible at last to see what was being done in the field. The journal and the bibliography were crucial aids and stimuli, and under Laurie's editorship they became the mainstay of the subject.

The development of the study of Australian Literature in which Laurie played a central role has been crucially important for the national culture. Not to know about one's own heritage, not to have one's literary tradition kept alive in schools and universities, would be to surrender to a colonial cultural situation. The contemporary pressures to establish the globalization of culture, which in effect means domination by American and British cultural production, are immense. The formal study of Australian literature is one

way in which Australian books can remain in print and a tradition can be maintained. It can provide an alternative to the publicity and promotional machines of the transnational entertainment industries.

I first met Laurie in 1966 when he spent a year lecturing at the University of Sydney, his alma mater. The English Department had been split into two. One half was run by Sam Goldberg with courses based on the writers approved of by the followers of the Cambridge critic F. R. Leavis and his journal *Scrutiny*. The other was pluralistic, non-doctrinaire, and traditional, run by Gerry Wilkes. I had been appointed by Goldberg but jumped ship to the non-doctrinaire courses. Laurie had been recruited to supplement Goldberg's available staff.

But Laurie was no Leavisite. He had completed his doctorate at the University of London on George Meredith – a novelist held in particular contempt by the Leavisites. I enjoyed Meredith, too, and I recruited Laurie to write an article on Meredith for *Balcony,* the journal some of us had established to confront *The Critical Review: Melbourne-Sydney*, with which Goldberg promoted the Leavisite line. And in turn Laurie recruited me to review a couple of bibliographies of Hal Porter and Patrick White for *ALS*. And so began our fraternisation across enemy lines.

Over the years we continued to publish and review each other's work. I remember reviewing the bibliography of Marcus Clarke that Samuel Rowe Simmons had begun and Laurie completed, and Laurie's puzzled surprise when I pointed out that he had managed to omit a couple of important articles on Clarke – both written by Laurie himself. His reviews and articles on my fiction were always considered and generous.

Editing *ALS* might have been enough for many men and women. But Laurie, having moved to the University of Queensland, next came up with a project of anthologies of Australian writing, the Portable Australian Authors, later renamed the Australian Authors series. Frank Thompson, the then manager of the University of Queensland Press, accepted the proposal enthusiastically. These volumes soon established themselves as indispensible texts for the developing courses in the subject that were established in the ensuing decades.

Gerry Wilkes had given me a couple of reissues of Christina Stead's novels to review for *Southerly* and I had written about them at some enthusiastic length. Laurie asked me if I would edit a selection of her writing for the Portables. But Christina Stead wrote long novels, and I did not think that selecting excerpts from them would properly represent her work. 'What about Marcus Clarke?' I asked, since I was writing a monograph for the 'Australian Writers and their Work' series Oxford University Press published in Melbourne. Central to Laurie's own researches was his enthusiasm for Marcus Clarke. It never

struck me that Laurie might have been thinking of editing a Clarke collection himself. Many scholars become extremely possessive of the subjects on which they write. Laurie was quite the opposite. He saw his role as one of encouraging and facilitating. His enthusiasm for Marcus Clarke was one that he was more than happy to share. I was soon conscripted and signed up to edit a selection of Clarke's writing for the first of the Portables.

I write 'conscripted' advisedly. Laurie had great skills in getting people to do things. Beneath his deceptively beguiling manner, his genial gaze at the weird ways of the world around him, Laurie was immensely adept at getting people to some band wagon he was directing, and then getting them to push. Those who have worked with him will know what I mean. But we all accepted it and forgave him because the tasks he imposed were not for his personal aggrandisement but for the advancement of Australian literature. He remained a constant support and encouragement to me in my own work on Clarke.

I was enjoying what I thought was a well-earned early retirement at my retreat in the Valley of the Tweed when Laurie took up the overseer's whip and struck again. He had discovered that Ken Stewart, whose work he had regularly published in *ALS*, had received an ARC grant to work on Victorian literary culture. Laurie suggested that Ken might look at the life of Marcus Clarke written by Clarke's old school friend, Cyril Hopkins, brother of the poet and priest Gerard Manley Hopkins. For years it had languished unpublished in Mitchell Library. Maybe Ken could use the ARC funding to get it copied and transcribed and edited and published. Ken obligingly set his research assistant to work. But when it came to editing and annotating the now digitized text, Ken felt he'd done enough while Laurie felt that Ken was moving too slowly, and over one of the long lunches we used to have in the early years of this century at Omeros Bros seafood restaurant on the Gold Coast, Laurie asked me if I would like to help out. I agreed, expecting the majority of the work to have been done by Ken and Laurie. I would simply annotate the odds and ends they might have been less familiar with, like Clarke's experiments with hashish and his claims to have sampled opium and absinthe. But as the years passed, and there were many of them, it didn't turn out quite like that, and I was drawn deeper and deeper into exploring and annotating the details of Clarke's life. Soon I was immersed in the project which took a good five years, and then led to my spending another five years on a documentary biography of Clarke, Gordon and Kendall, *Wild Bleak Bohemia.* I dedicated it to Laurie.

In his enthusiasm for Australian writing Laurie was always expansive. He introduced interviews into *ALS* alongside critical articles. He introduced crime fiction and science fiction into the range of materials discussed and anthologized. The issue he ran on 'The New Australian Writing' did wonders for getting acceptance for the fiction, poetry and drama that emerged in the 1970s. His own particular interests

were wide. He edited a pioneering selection of Clarke's journalism, *The Colonial City*, that made available again for the first time in a hundred years 'those magnificent articles'. He wrote a study of convict fiction, *Unnatural Lives*, and a study of the American commentator on Australian writing. C. Hartley Grattan. He edited a lively selection of Australian short stories that has gone through half a dozen printings and, with Irmtraud Petersson, *Changing Places*, an anthology of Australian writing on Europe. And, marking the 1988 bicentenary, he edited, with others, *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia*.

His enthusiasms were not restricted to the past in the traditional way of academics. When the editors of the various literary magazines marched on the Literature Board of the Australia Council at the Adelaide Festival to demand greater funding, Laurie was there with them. Years later he wrote an account of it which Carole Ferrier published in *Hecate*. He recalled that I had tipped off the editors about where the board was meeting, but when I remarked that I didn't remember that, he cut the mention out: on reflection, however, I think he was probably right. He maintained a lively interest in contemporary writing, and was always happy to meet with young writers and scholars, to turn up to book launches and readings, and to have a drink or two or three and a talk afterwards. As I wrote in my memoir *Growing Wild*, 'At times Laurie seemed like some super secret agent, deep behind enemy lines, carefully observing the shifts and changes of literary politics, collecting data for the increasingly comprehensive annual bibliography of Australian literature which was so important a feature of *ALS*. All too often I would awake after a long session at pub or party with Laurie and an ensuing night of nausea of Barry McKenzie dimensions, to find him as fresh and unaffected and genial as ever, blinking in the morning sun like some Antipodean George Smiley.'

And his later metamorphosis into a travel writer for the *Courier-Mail* should also be mentioned. It chimed in happily with his amazingly extensive travels in his retirement, to Italy, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Cambodia and elsewhere. While back in Brisbane he remained an active member of the Friends of the Fryer Library, and wrote some charming reminiscences of his country childhood in southern New South Wales for *Quadrant*, encouraged, he told me, by the rural recollections I had written.

Laurie was an inspiration, a stimulus, a facilitator, an editor, a scholar, a bibliographer and a very good friend. He is deeply missed.

I'm Listening Like the Orange Tree: In Memory of Laurie Hergenhan, ed Antonella Riem Natale, Sue Ballyn, Stefano Mercanti and Caterina Colomba, Forum, Udine, 2021

Brian Kiernan

Brian Kiernan, who died on 1st March 2024, was a major figure in the development of Australian literary studies, and of the teaching of Australian literature in the university. He was one of a group of scholars who crucially contributed to the acceptance of Australian literature as a recognized academic discipline from the 1960s onwards.

Born in Melbourne on 24 July 1937, he was a student at Xavier College. His reminiscence of his years there that he contributed to a series of articles on schooldays in *Quadrant* (January 1969) resulted in the school's cancelling him from the old boys' register.

He studied English Literature at the University of Melbourne, where he completed his B.A., Dip. Ed., and M.A. He spent some time in Italy teaching English to the Italian Air Force, and always maintained connections with the country; his wife studied Italian at the University of Sydney and lectured in it both there and at Melbourne University. His cousin, the novelist and journalist Desmond O'Grady was for some years Vatican correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald.* After a period lecturing in literature at Swinburne College of Technology, in 1972 he was appointed to a lectureship in English at the University of Sydney, where he taught English, American and Australian literature until his retirement, having been made Associate-Professor in 1987.

His first book, *Images of Society and Nature: Seven Essays on Australian Novels* (1971) took issue with what critics like A. A. Phillips had privileged as the dominant tradition in Australian fiction with an emphasis not on the interior life of the individual but on his activities as a social being (particularly his work experiences), a working class viewpoint, and the employment of a colloquial idiom. 'One good reason for doubting the importance placed on the "Lawson-Furphy tradition"' Kiernan wrote, 'is that none of its exponents has been able to suggest more than superficial resemblances between its presumed founders. Lawson and Furphy have little in common except similar social material; the uses they make of it are not only quite different, they are of a different order.' He offered readings of 'what I consider to be the most original and imaginative of Australian novels' by Joseph Furphy, Henry Handel Richardson, Christina Stead, Xavier Herbert, Patrick White, and Thomas Keneally. It was followed by a monograph *Criticism* (1974) examining the various critical approaches to Australian Literature. Laurie Hergenhan noted, 'His critical approach is always flexible, fluent and accessible as he turns over the possibilities, weighing the cosmopolitan context – of which no critic in the field has a wider knowledge –against the local.'

This reassessment of the Lawson 'tradition' in no way involved a dismissal of Lawson's actual work. In 1976 Laurie Hergenhan invited him to edit a selection of Henry Lawson's writing for the University of Queensland Press's new series of Portable Australian Authors. It became the best-selling title in the series and Kiernan was later involved major projects on Lawson, editing *The Essential Henry Lawson* (1982) and introducing the two volumes of *Henry Lawson: Complete Works* edited by Leonard Cronin (1984).

During the late 1960s and early 1970 Kiernan was regularly reviewing new Australian fiction in the press and the magazines. He wrote a positive review of Frank Moorhouse's first book, and this led to Moorhouse's inviting him to join the editorial board of the innovative short story magazine *Tabloid Story* in 1972. Initially appointed as the Melbourne editor; his move to Balmain disconcerted Moorhouse. 'How appropriate you live in Dock Road, since you're always on trial,' he told him, interstate visitors and outsiders always on trial for Frank. I drew on the various taunts and tensions of this time to write *The Short Story Embassy: a Novel*. 'I felt myself more deeply drawn in the further I read,' Brian said on reading it. But he bore no ill will, and he later wrote about it in the festschrift he and David Brooks edited for me, *Running Wild*.

Meanwhile *Tabloid Story*, which was designed as a short story supplement to existing magazines, was having difficulty finding any hosts that would take it. Brian recalled:

As acting editor, while the others roved, I became slowly entombed by the mounting walls of paper – fresh manuscripts, manuscripts to be returned, letters from writers whose stories had been accepted but not yet published. Feelers put out to possible new hosts encountered nothing. Even apparently firm agreements appeared to be jinxed. Then at the lowest moment, the editor of *The Bulletin* rang and asked if the editors would be interested in placing an issue and would like to discuss it over lunch at their office. *The Bulletin* and a free lunch! *The Bulletin* had been the vehicle for a generation of writers immediately before and after Federation who had wanted to make it new in terms of their experience and to break through the prevailing conventions – Henry Lawson, Barbara Baynton, Edward Dyson, Steele Rudd ... For myself as acting editor, this was an historically symbolic opportunity to present the new fiction of the seventies in the magazine that had carried the new fiction of the nineties. The sense of some symmetry in time, of an appointment with history, was also felt by roving editor Moorhouse, who roved back at this time. Much earlier in his career, Frank had been a copy boy in the *Telegraph* building, and now had satisfaction in recalling those times with senior management and writers over coffee and liqueurs in Sir Frank Packer's private dining room. We ran Murray Bail's 'The Drover's Wife' as the lead story. My

accompanying note that *The Bulletin* had published Lawson's story of the same title in 1892 was subbed out; the press missed covering our meeting with history.'

Editing *Tabloid Story* and living in Balmain, he soon became an active member of the literary community thriving there, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* featured Brian and his wife in its survey of the *glitterati*. In 1977 he edited the influential short story anthology *The Most Beautiful Lies*, featuring fiction by Murray Bail, Peter Carey, Morris Lurie, Frank Moorhouse and Michael Wilding. Four were Balmain residents at the time. As for Lurie, Brian had lived next door in Melbourne to the original on whom Lurie's character Rapaport was based. Brian was one of those literary critics who moved happily between the worlds of academia, writing and journalism. Publishers lunches may have been going out of fashion, certainly as far as our publishers went, but Brian maintained the tradition of the literary lunch. A photograph from his 50th birthday which I drew on for the cover of a novel, *Superfluous Men*, shows him at a characteristic occasion – with David Williamson, Don Anderson, Dale Atrens and myself. Frank Moorhouse, Barry Oakley, Luke Slattery, Ken Stewart and Laurie Hergenhan were amongst other regulars. And he was a welcoming host to visiting scholars and writers from the United States, Britain and China.

In 1976 he was visiting fellow in American Literature at Yale University. And he lectured widely on Australian literature in France, Italy, Denmark, Britain and China. He was involved in teaching the first visiting group of Chinese scholars studying Australian Literature at Sydney University in the 1980s, and his editorial and critical work had a strong influence on the development of Australian studies in China.

In 1980 his pioneering study of Patrick White's fiction appeared, and for a number of years Brian taught a seminar on White's fiction, until a purge of dead white males ended it. It was followed by another major work in 1990, his biography of David Williamson, with whom he had taught at Swinburne in the 1960s. A collection of his essays, *Studies in Australian Literary History* appeared in 1997. During the 1990s he contributed the Australian Literature component to the Modern Language's Humanities Research Association annual bibliography in the U.K.

Kiernan was a founding member of ASAL, the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, and for many years he was its president. He was Australian representative for the American Association of Australian Studies and was honoured by a festschrift of tributes in its journal *Antipodes* in 2008. And he was a long time committee member of the New South Wales Writers' Centre.

He is survived by his wife, Suzanne and his daughter Teresa. His son Michael predeceased him.

Quadrant, 68, 5, May 2024

David Myers

David Myers, the author, academic and publisher, who died on 2 March aged 64, was born in Wyong, NSW on 19 May 1942. He was educated at Manly High School and the University of Sydney, where he took first class honours in German. He had intended to major in French, but went to the wrong lecture room by mistake and was too embarrassed to leave. Upon graduation he joined the Department of Foreign Affairs, but after six months realized diplomacy was not his forte and resigned to take up a doctoral scholarship at Sydney and, later, the University of Munich. He wrote his thesis on the novels of Thomas Mann.

In 1967 he was appointed Associate-Professor of German at the University of Toronto. He soon introduced courses in World Literature, which proved immensely popular, especially with American draft-dodgers seeking asylum in Canada during the war in Vietnam. But he missed Australia, especially being able to see the snow-free earth throughout winter.

In 1974 he took up a senior lectureship in German at the University of Adelaide. Extending his interests to Australian literature, he wrote an M. A. on Patrick White, published as *The Peacocks and the Bourgeoisie* (1978); his study of White's earliest story was recently anthologized in the prestigious *Short Story Criticism* collection published by Thomson Gale in the USA.

In 1970 he was Guest Professor at the University of Cologne, and in 1980 and 1982 Alexander von Humboldt post-doctoral fellow at the University of Freiburg. Then in 1986 he was appointed Dean of Arts at the Capricornia Institute of Higher Education, Rockhampton, soon to become Central Queensland University, at Rockhampton. He was made Professor of Comparative Literature there in 1991.

Gradually German studies and then the arts in general began to vanish in the degenerative frenzy of university reconstruction and he found himself increasingly without any courses or students. He responded to the crisis with two books, *The Great Literacy Debate* (1992) and *Reinventing the Humanities* (1995). And he embraced Australia's developing focus on Asia. Professor R. K. Dhawan, editor of *Commonwealth Literature*, has paid tribute to the way 'he was always accessible, supportive and a source of inspiration. . . . David Myers was a

good friend of India. He visited India frequently and published a great deal on Indian literature.' He delivered the keynote address at the Eleventh International Conference of Commonwealth Studies, held at Roorkee, India in October 2005, and was a member of the advisory board of the *Journal of Australasian Literature* (New Delhi). In Thailand he visited Esarn and wrote about meeting the novelist Pira Sudham and from 1992-4 he was managing director of the Thailand-Australia Foundation. And he learned Japanese and developed a network of Japanese-Australian academic exchanges. He visited Japan regularly and wrote and co-edited *Japanese Society Today* (1995), *Japan at the Crossroads* (1998), and *Today's Japan* (2003). But it his hilarious collection of stories *Storms in a Japanese Teacup* (1996) that best captures the comedy of cross-cultural misunderstanding and academic entrepreneurialism of those years. It is a contemporary classic.

In 1993 he answered a Queensland State government advertisement offering seed-funding for a regional publishing initiative and established Central Queensland University Press. David became a regular traveller through the outback, organising book launches in shire halls and council chambers, attending agricultural shows and encouraging writers throughout the region. The press rapidly became a major cultural force, specializing in regional history and memoirs, and in recognition of his achievement he was made a member of the Order of Australia in 2004. He also developed a literary list that reached beyond the region, and co-edited three volumes of an annual anthology of new writing, *Best Stories Under the Sun*, which gave space to new unknowns and neglected older writers alongside the established and best-selling.

Despite the deepening gloom of university life, he maintained a mischievous sense of humour. When a distinguished poet complained that his name looked effeminate in the lettering on the cover, David printed a new dust-jacket to wrap around it, but retained the identical typography. For a vote of thanks to the university's vice-chancellor, he composed a satirical calypso in the style of Harry Belafonte. Interviewed by the *Courier-Mail* he happily posed astride a brass cast of a rodeo bull, remarking that the journalist, Des Houghton, had assured him, 'I haven't made you sound stupid. You've done that enough with the photo.'

A master of comic verse and satiric fiction, he published the collections of stories *Mudmaps to Paradise* (1987) and *Cornucopia County* (1991), and the poetry collections *Bleeding Battlers from Ironbark* (1987) and *Secret Sins of the Suburban Swaggy* (2000). In

2004 he published his semi-fictional autobiography, *The Bohemian Bourgeois* (2004), a delightful novel he described as the 'memoirs of a larrikin Casanova with foot in mouth disease.' I found it a true story of our times, and very funny indeed: a gentle, affectionate portrait of the liberal university world of the 1960s and 70s, through to its sad decline today. More recently he had begun a project of irreverent re-writings of the great myths. He dealt first with the Ancient Greeks in *Glorious Gods and Swaggering Heroes* (2006), where he took the hallowed heroes of Greek literature and mythology and reinterpreted them with a sardonic eye and a comic turn of phrase. He then turned to the Bible for his forthcoming book, *The Highly Unauthorised Old Testament* (2007). Amidst the contemporary corporate conformity of accountant-driven global conglomerates, David stood out as an individualist of the old-school, committed to proving that the day of the bon-vivanting gentleman publisher was not yet over.

A keen sportsman, he kept in touch with his original football mates, and went surfing to the end. He was delighted to have been asked last year to help publish the history of his old surf club at Fairlight, near Manly, reputedly the first in Australia.

He married first Diane Bothwell (1967; dissolved 1977) with whom he had a son and a daughter; and secondly Jutta Moser (1981), with whom he had a son and daughter.

In the flesh pots of the Gold Coast, - or, rather, the vegetarian pots, since we were both vegetarian - I would sit with David. The literary editor of the *Courier-Mail* had declared in print that the days of bon-vivanting gentlemen publishers were over. We endeavoured to prove her wrong. But was there more to life than a literary lunch?

The solution was obviously a book. Here was a publisher, not exactly captive, but at least post-prandially mellow and susceptible. I tentatively suggested a short story anthology. He thought it was a great idea and offered to publish it immediately. I kept to myself for the moment the idea of its being an annual event.

The short story was once the jewel in the crown of Australian literature. But in these republican days the crown had tarnished and the jewels seemed to have been pawned. No longer did the weekly magazines publish stories. No longer did most of the weekly magazines exist. David for years had been fiction editor of *Social Alternatives*, but that had ceased publication. The quarterlies had dropped to three issues a year, some to merely one.

Anthologies were no longer popular in the eyes of the major publishers, because they didn't make money.

It is hard for a small publisher to make money. The conglomerates do their own distribution. A small press has to go to an independent distributor, who requires 22-25% of the retail price, and the bookshops take another 40%. Increasingly the bookshop chains dominating the retail trade demand 45% or more. Factor in 10% for royalties, and there is little margin left to cover costs, let alone make a profit. Economies of scale come into effect it you have a large print run. But how many copies of an anthology of literary fiction can you realistically expect to sell? A modest print run is the only sensible policy: and with a modest print run it is pretty well impossible to do more than modestly cover costs: if that.

We discussed strategies. We decide that we would pay contributors in copies rather than in cash. There wasn't any cash. This meant that at least a substantial number of the modest print run would be spoken for and the contributors could give away or sell their copies. This would mean the book would be in circulation. The one thing large and small publishers are agreed upon is that word of mouth recommendation sells books. And to get that recommendation, you need to have copies of the books out there.

And it worked! The collection appeared. Nigel Krauth prescribed it as a text at Griffith university, which sold a decent swag of copies. We launched it at the Brisbane Writers' Festival and sold another seven. And we sold out. I then revealed my idea of making it an annual event. Full disclosure towards the end of another literary lunch. David genially agreed. We began to lunch more regularly. We persuaded ourselves to bite the bullet and apply for literature board funding, and David generously applied himself to it. I will not say ungrudgingly. It is no easy task. To begin with you have to cross your heart and swear you've read the Australia Council handbook for grant applicants. It is one of those prescribed texts that seems, as you struggle through it, longer even than *Poor Fellow My Country*. Then you have to fill in the forms. Even then there can be problems. It turned out that some decades earlier someone at CQU had received some grant money for some project and never submitted an acquittal. Until the acquittal was submitted and approved, CQU could receive no more funding, even though CQU Press had not been involved. David plunged into the archives of university administration and began working on the acquittal.

We triumphed. The Literature Board generously funded us for the next two volumes. It didn't make the project any more viable: the funds had to go to pay contributors only, they did not help with production costs. That is the nature of Literature Board funding, and the reason we had not applied before. But it kept the contributors happy: and many of them kept the press happy by using their fee to purchase copies of the book.

And it kept us happy. David would come down the coast at the weekend for a surf with his little dog Zac, call in for lunch on my five
acre lantana farm, as he persisted in calling it, and spend the afternoon with a few drinks and talk of books, plans for writing and publishing. Other times I would drive up to the Gold Coast and we would meet in a Chinese or an Indian or a Korean or a Japanese or a Thai restaurant and we would talk about books we had read and books we planned to write and publish. He was a generous and loyal friend, and he is sadly missed.

Asian Journal of Literature, Society and Culture (Bangkok), incorporating *Australian,* 12 March 2007, *Idiom 23,* 19 (December 2007) and *Newswrite,* 164 (November 2006).

Soumyen Mukherjee

I think it was Peter King who first introduced me to Soumyen Mukherjee. It was in the old staff club, now abolished to prevent any such meetings of like minds from taking place. At the time I was editing a series of Asian and Pacific Writing for University of Queensland Press. My interest was literary: believing that there would be something to learn and discover from contemporary writing in the region, something that would interest contemporary writers and readers in Australia and elsewhere. Yann Lovelock, a poet friend from Oxford with whom I had kept in sporadic touch, had been polishing up a translation by Barbara Palmer of a Bangladeshi novel, Manik Bandopadhyaya's, *Padma River Boatman*, and I accepted it for publication. I was describing the series to Soumyen, and it emerged he had met Bandopadhyaya. UQP wanted the series to have introductions so I asked Soumyen if he would write one for this novel. He duly did, and recalled seeing the young Bandopadhyaya in the years before his success, his children running around bare-bottomed. The novelist's daughter wrote and complained of this irreverent portrayal of her father and the implication that they were living in rural poverty.

I should have known from this first encounter than Mukherjee was going to be nothing but trouble. I took him down to the Newcastle and introduced him to the Libertarians as a reward. He soon showed his political allegiances. The Commonwealth Police came round the University with photographs of wanted draft resisters. They came into the History Common Room, showed them to the staff, asking if anyone had seen them.

'Oh,' said Soumyen, 'all these white faces, they all look the same to me.'

I must confess this story is only hearsay. I was not there on that occasion. Nor was I there when he went up for promotion, but I included a version of what happened in my tragic novel of university life, *Academia Nuts*:

Next was Bannerjee. The interviewing committee got the first word in with him.

'Aren't you ashamed of being such a difficult character?'

He blenched. He almost turned into a white man. If he'd prostrated himself before the committee and said, 'Sahibs and memsahibs, I do heartily repent my difficult character and I promise to be a good black servant of my imperial masters and mistresses' he might have had a chance. But the shock turned him white and lost him any chance of being a token ethnic appointee.

As if that weren't enough, Soumyen became convinced that at the end of the book, I had him killed off. He claims that when he asked me why I had him commit suicide at the end of the book, I retorted, 'It's what you should have done.'

Perhaps I said that. But I certainly didn't have him killed. In *Academia Nuts* I call him Bannerjee. At the end of the book, another difficult radical character called Bannerman is found dead in his university room, supposedly from suicide. What I had in mind was the mysterious death of Freddie May, and the way Ted Wheelwright was blocked from promotion. No doubt it was no coincidence that the names sounded similar, supporting the general point about the fate of those academics who say unwelcome things.

For a while most of the things Soumyen, Peter King and I were saying were clearly unwelcome. We thought it might be a useful academic activity to combine our different expertise – from History, Government and Literature – and jointly teach a course on the political novel. Or the colonial novel. Or the novel and imperialism.

We met nothing but resistance and refusal. The various benighted heads of the departments of Government, History and English refused point blank. Disciplines were disciplines. Boundaries must be maintained. There must be no interdisciplinary thought.

That was the university's position in the 1970s.

We set about looking for ways to subvert it. At the beginning of the 1980s, Soumyen established the Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture. During the years of protest against the war in Vietnam, staff and students from different disciplines had got to know each other and discussed things. For a while it seemed like a real university. All that had come to an end by the late 70s and the beginning of the repression of the Reagan-Thatcher years, duly followed by their Australian collaborators. Soumyen proposed to institute and interdisciplinary programme of seminars, conferences and publications. At the time there was nothing like this in the university and it provided an immense stimulus.

The plan was to hold conferences and publish the proceedings. But while a conference was being announced, with sufficient lead time for participants to prepare papers, it was decided to initiate the publication programme. As it happened there was a manuscript on hand. In 1977 Stephen Knight and I had edited a collection of essays, *The Radical Reader*.

'I hope there are more *Radical Readers*!' Christina Stead wrote to me. The first one did well and we planned a second volume. For some reason – cost, maybe – it was being typeset in Indonesia where Max lane, whom either Stephen or Pat knew, was running a development program and had begun a typesetting operation. But either a fire or a flood or a riot destroyed the typeset copy. We tried again, but the second attempt was lost in the fire that engulfed the new warehouse that Wild & Woolley had leased in downtown Sydney.

So Stephen proposed recycling the materials as a basis for the first of the SASSC publications, *Words and Worlds* which he co-edited with Soumyen in 1983. By the time the volume appeared, many of the original contributions had been withdrawn and published elsewhere, and of those contributors who remained, some substituted different essays.

The aim had been to provide a cross-disciplinary forum so that literary critics, historians, anthropologists and social scientists could meet and discuss issues that extended beyond the narrow boundaries of their departments. Departmental boundaries were as closely guarded in those days as any contemporary border security operation. It wouldn't do to have political

scientists talking to literary types, historians getting together with political scientists. The Association confronted these taboos and arranged talks, seminars and conferences. The proceedings of the conferences were published. Hence the publishing project.

Gradually we moved from publishing conference proceedings to original books. By this time the university press had been closed down, along with many another university press. Governmental policy had led to the running down of the humanities, staff numbers dramatically dropping, student enrolments drastically reduced, as the new world order directed the young into economics, law, business studies and computer science.

As a consequence of this, traditional scholarly publishers had begun to shy away from the traditional humanities because the market had become so small. I remember the arts editor of Cambridge University Press expressing surprise and admiration, the former especially, for what we were doing. Four hundred copies was now the expected sale of a work of literary criticism he told me. Internationally. Not long afterwards Craig Munro of University of Queensland Press told me two hundred copies were as many as you might expect to sell of a book on Australian literature.

We used to print a thousand copies and sold most of them. The money received from conference enrolments and the association's membership was used to fund the books. When conferences became fewer and we published more original monographs, we sought subsidies from the university, the Australian Academy of the Humanities and such like sources. Any profits made on individual books went back into the bank account to fund the next titles. No one got paid. The authors received no royalties, though they were given lots of free copies to send to colleagues in their fields, spread the world, get reviews, hand out as Christmas presents. None of us took any money for the time spent on the myriad of tasks of commissioning and writing readers' reports, editing, proof-reading and publishing. It was all very hand to mouth. I would meet the printer in the university staff club and hand over camera-ready copy, deliver the books to Paul Brennan, our distributor, in the boot of my car.

Over twenty-two years we published twenty-two titles. We received excellent reviews, in scholarly journals, the *Times Literary Supplement,* and the *Australian Book Review.* We arranged co-publishing in the United Kingdom and India. And then it all came to an end. The reforms in tax law, the introduction of the GST, the introduction of the ABN, made it all unfeasible. None of us had the time, energy or expertise to comply with the new requirements

of quarterly reporting, of audited accounts. Nor could we afford to pay to have these tasks done. The whole operation was run on a shoe-string.

And so, regretfully, we decided to call it a day, pack it in, close down the association, take early retirement. The university staff club where we used to meet Ed Lidums, the printer, had already been closed down.

Much has been said recently about the law of unintended consequences. A political action in one area produces unfortunate consequences in another. Governmental requirements had made a centuries old tradition of voluntary activity impossible to sustain. Voluntarism was now to be replaced by professionalism: except that in many cases it was not replaced, it simply ceased to exist.

Are these unintended consequences? Or is it all part of an overriding plan, part of the remorseless imposition of control and monopolisation on every aspect of individual life? Large organisations, major commercial enterprises, can absorb the cost of quarterly reporting, auditing, health and safety, environmental and other government requirements. But voluntary organisations, small presses, little magazines, and learned societies are gradually being squeezed out of existence. The amateur and the voluntary are being replaced by the professional, the global, the corporate. This is especially the case in scholarly publishing, which insofar as it survives is being increasingly driven into the control of global monopolies.

Sydney Studies was one of the publishing projects that lost. Its demise was symptomatic of the way the variety of our cultural and political expression is being reduced. Sometimes you have to wonder whether this is not an unintended consequence at all.

Sydney University Arts Association seminar

Father Paul Stenhouse

It was James Murray who was instrumental in my meeting Father Stenhouse. I had recommended a couple of James' novels for publication to Nick Walker's Arcadia Press, and James had reviewed my *Wild Bleak Bohemia* about Marcus Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall for *Annals Australasia*, for which he was media and movie columnist. James

turned up one day with a heavy, bound volume, a thesis from the University of New England which Father Stenhouse the editor of *Annals* had written some years earlier. Its topic was the journalist, editor and poet John Farrell. I knew of Farrell as a friend of Henry Lawson and William Lane, and as an advocate of the Single Tax movement, one of the radical organizations for achieving social justice in the late nineteenth century. But apart from that I knew nothing of Farrell. His satirical, political poetry from *The Bulletin* was forgotten, and none of the critical and scholarly studies of the writing of the period dealt with him. I read the thesis with increasing excitement. Here was an important, scholarly account of a major figure. Here was a major contribution to the literary and political history of the 1890s. I turned to the title page again and yes, it had been submitted for a Master of Arts degree. I was astounded that it was not a doctoral thesis.

When I met Father Stenhouse I mentioned my surprise that it had not been submitted for a doctorate. He already had a doctorate from the University of Sydney for a thesis in Samaritan studies, he replied. He had modestly felt that two doctorates might seem excessive. Samaritan studies was his area of scholarship and research, the area in which he had published, a world away from nineteenth century Australian literature. The Farrell project, it emerged, had been written out of a sense of family responsibility, if not quite obligation. Farrell was his great-grandfather. Comprehensively and indeed massively researched, discovering and identifying some 130 poems Farrell had contributed to *The Bulletin* and other journals, covering Farrell's editorship of a succession of regional and single tax newspapers and – for a brief period – the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, the thesis had been written almost as a diversion from Father Stenhouse's multitude of duties and scholarly activities.

I don't think that Father Stenhouse had ever thought to publish the thesis. It had been written back in the 1980s, but almost nothing had been written about Farrell in the interim. I recommended it to Nick Walker for Australian Scholarly Publishing and he readily accepted it. Preparing it for publication involved getting the original typescript scanned and digitized and the updating of some of the references to Farrell's associates on whom more recent studies had appeared. It all took time and labour but, amidst all his other activities, Father Stenhouse finalized the text and the book duly appeared in 2018.

We used to meet every month or so during this period and afterwards, checking though footnotes, standardizing references, and then we would have a light lunch at one of the

shopping malls near the monastery. And this was how I was drawn into writing regularly for *Annals*, which he had been editing since 1966, apart from four years in Rome in 1977-81. For like John Farrell, Father Stenhouse and I had that fascination with print media, with writing for and editing papers and magazines and setting up publishing houses. I had developed the bug at school and continued at university and began reviewing for *The Bulletin* soon after I came to Australia in my early twenties. Father Stenhouse had left school at twelve and been trained as a printer on a local newspaper. 'He has spent all his priestly life as a journalist' the author's note to his translation of *The Conquest of Abyssinia* announced. The first piece I wrote for *Annals* was about magazines, and how their hey-day seemed to be over, radio, television and the internet superseding them. The last piece I wrote was for the last issue that Father Stenhouse edited, surveying the handful of publications in Australia that had survived as long as *Annals'* 130 years. *Annals* was like a refuge for me, as one by one magazines and newspapers shrunk in size or ceased publication altogether.

Father Stenhouse's interests and concerns had an extraordinary range. Journalism was only a part of them. He translated Samaritan texts and wrote monographs on Middle Arabic grammar. His scholarly work on Samaritan studies had expanded into an interest in both historical and contemporary issues in the Middle East, and he wrote on these topics for the *Australian, Catholic Weekly* and *Sydney Morning Herald*. Most recently he wrote a series of studies of the history and contemporary practice of Islam, which he published in *Annals* and then collected in book form. He was planning to publish it through Chevalier Press, which he had established in 1971. I suggested he contact Australian Scholarly Publishing, who had published *John Farrell*, about finding a reliable and inexpensive printer, and Nick Walker promptly and enthusiastically responded that he would like to publish the book himself in his Pamphleteer series. And so *Islam: Context and Complexity* duly appeared in 2019.

I valued these regular meting with Father Stenhouse. From him I learned something of the history and complexity of Islam and of Middle Eastern politics. Our conversations ranged from the medieval to the modern, from the literary to the political. I was able to draw on his generous help in yet another area, drawing on his expertise in Latin to translate source material when I revised my *True Adventures of Dr John Dee and Sir Edward Kelly.* Our meetings were regularly interrupted by people coming up to Father Stenhouse and greeting him with obvious affection and friendship, people old and young who knew him as priest and friend, many from

overseas that he had helped when Catholic Chaplain to Asian students studying in Australian universities and schools. His generosity and sympathy and goodness were apparent in all these encounters, returning us from gloom about the world's political direction and western policies in the Middle East to the immediacy of caring human contact.

The world of writing, editing, contributing to newspapers and magazines, and talking to fellow writers and journalists was the world we had in common. Over the years he had numbered amongst his friends and associates such well known and diverse writers as Cyril Pearl, Alister Kershaw, Rupert Lockwood and more, and the columns of *Annals* demonstrate the range of the contributors he continued to recruit. During the war in Vietnam he ran two opposing pieces, one by David Armstrong the professor of philosophy advocating war, and one by David Armstrong of *The Australian* opposing it, happily exploiting the coincidence of names. He was never beyond a joke and delighted to publish the drawings and cartoons of Kevin Drumm.

But his was not a desk-bound life. His travels were wide and his experiences often startling. Like the time he was photographing some medieval building in the Bekka [check spelling] valley and found himself surrounded by a posse of armed, mounted men who thought he was photographing their marijuana plantation. Or the time in Damascus when he inquired of the monastery cook what the evening meal consisted of and discovered that each night the cook went out and caught and cooked a stray cat. His energy and commitment were extraordinary. Right up until the end he was editing the 130th birthday issue of *Annals*, flying to Brisbane to give a paper on Islam and driving to Campion College to give a conference paper on John Farrell. While for his bedtime reading he was working through Grote's history of Ancient Greece. He was an inspiration.

Paul Stenhouse, ed. Peter Malone, Australian Scholarly, 2020

Dennis Wren

Dennis Wren, who died at Gosford NSW on April 5 aged 80, was one of the great characters of Australian publishing in the 1960s and 70s. His extended lunches were famous and much

appreciated by literary Melbourne. He had a ready fund of anecdotes of the world of publishing which he knew from top to bottom.

Dennis Wren was born 26 May, 1926, in St Ives in England's East Anglia. His father died when he was 16, and Wren left school to work with the newspaper and book distributor W. H. Smith. This was where he learned to tie secure parcels, a necessary skill for a publisher he always insisted. In 1944 he enlisted in the Royal Navy, and served in the Pacific, which was when he first saw Australia.

Back with W H Smiths, Wren soon became book representative for East Anglia. Then he joined the publisher Hamish Hamilton, becoming sales manager. Robert Maxwell lured him to become sales director of Pergamon Press, but the list was scientific and technical. Wren missed the contact he had had with the literary world at Hamish Hamiltons; occasions like showing Simenon round the red-light district of Manchester were no longer part of the job. When six months later Heinemann approached him to manage and streamline their Australian operation, he eagerly accepted.

Appointed to run William Heinemann's Australian distribution arm in 1966, within a few years he had persuaded his London bosses to set up Heinemann Australia as a separate entity and to publish local material. Authors he nurtured included Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnett, Ian Turner, R. S. Whitington and Barry Oakley. But London controlled the finances and had little interest in local publishing; they were more concerned with offloading stock that had not sold in Britain.

In 1970 he resigned and set up his own company, Wren Publishing. In the brief but heady boom of the mid-70s, the novelists on his list included Judah Waten, Desmond O'Grady, Chester Eagle, John Rowe and A. Bertram Chandler. He published the pioneering short-story anthology *Classic Australian Stories* edited by Judah Waten and Stephen Murray-Smith, and Frank Crowley's two-volume *Modern Australia in Documents*. He recruited Desmond Pugh to illustrate Ivan Smith's *Death of a Wombat,* and Prince Philip to write the introduction. And his successful children's list included a series of works conceived by the Women's Movement Children's Literature Co-operative, that aimed to counteract social stereotyping in children's literature. He was particularly fond of the feminist cover of one title, showing a dragon with prominent boobs.

Wren's two major backers were a type-setting company and a printing company. The downside of this meant that he was locked into typesetting and printing arrangements and could not shop around for lower prices. A book that looked set to be a financial success, with every copy pre-sold, proved his nemesis. An inside account of crime and corruption, *Mr X - Police Informer* was pulped by the printer before release on the advice of their lawyers, although Wren's lawyer had cleared the book. The book had been pulped but the printing bill still had to be paid. It was the end of Wren Books.

After a period farming in the Mornington peninsula- he was a country boy - he returned to the world of newspapers where his career had begun. He and his wife Dee established a local paper, the *Independent News*, and later were involved in magazine publishing on the Queensland Gold Coast.

Weekly Book Newsletter, 1784 (16 May 2007)

Robert Yeo

I first met Robert in Singapore in 1989 when we were both participating in the 'Literatures of the Pacific' conference. I have never been a very keen conference goer. When you have spent years of your life delivering lectures, sitting listening to someone else lecturing is not very appealing. I would rather read a paper than listen to it. But conferences are as much about meeting people as listening to papers. And sitting next to me in one session was Robert Yeo. We got into conversation – not when the speakers were speaking, of course – and found that we both were writers as well as academics. That was a good start. And it must have been not long after meeting Robert that I read his marvellous novel *The Adventures of Holden Heng* published three years earlier, and I encountered in Holden Heng one of those fictional characters you never forget.

The conference had been one of a series that Edwin Thumboo in Singapore and Bruce Bennett in Perth had jointly established. Meeting alternatively at the University of Western Australia and the National University of Singapore , they assembled a mix of not only academics but also writers from the Pacific region. It was a mix that was very productive, the incorporation of writers as well as critics widening the range of interests and discourse. And it was a great way to meet the writers of the region. Back in the 1970s I had established the

'Asian and Pacific Writing' series with the University of Queensland Press, resulting in 20 volumes. But there were no festivals or conferences that I knew of in those years; the selecting and editing was all done by mail and I met very few of those writers. Now, thanks to Edwin and Bruce, I was able to meet some of them.

So, for all my doubts about conferences, I made a point of attending future conferences in this series, which increased my acquaintance with Robert and his wife Esther. We met for meals and drinks, shared anecdotes of people we knew, recommended books to each other that we had enjoyed, talked about the exigencies of getting published and reviewed and read, and all those ancillary activities ranging from my involvements in writing fiction and in publishing to Robert's involvements in theatre both as playwright and as chairman of the Drama Advisory Committee. Robert put me in touch with *Skoob Pacifica Anthology* edited by C. Y. Loh and I. K. Ong, in which we both appeared. And we reciprocated in writing about each others' work – a practical aspect of literary friendship that all too few writers observe any more. Robert wrote a long piece about my short fiction for the *Straits Times*, which he developed into an essay in *Running Wild*, the festschrift edited by David Brooks and Brian Kiernan for me. And I wrote a paper on his poems, presented to a 'Crossing Cultures' conference that Bruce Bennett had organized at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra, which I developed into an introduction for his selected poems, *Leaving Home, Mother*. These are the important, productive, supportive connexions between writers throughout the world, contacts and exchanges and understanding. They give us encouragement and assurance to carry on with what we are doing.

And we continued to read each others' work. Robert's marvellous, autobiographical *Routes: a Singaporean Memoir* had a particular resonance. My partner and her parents had lived in Singapore in the 1960s, and reading Robert's vivid account of his childhood and extended family there, Deborah and her mother were taken back to the Singapore of those years with great delight. It is a splendid book and, like all our memoirs when we reach the age we have reached, my *Growing Wild* included, it is inevitably a preservation of a world now vanished and a way of life that no longer exists. Which is what makes *Routes* so important a work in a world where history is fast being repressed and forgotten.

Having retired from the university of Sydney at the turn of the century determined to devote my future energies to fiction, I nevertheless found myself drawn into a scholarly project,

co-editing an unpublished life of the English born Australian novelist Marcus Clarke written by Cyril Hopkins, brother of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. And this in turn led to my writing the documentary group biography, *Wild Bleak Bohemia: Marcus Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall*. Marcus Clarke had a cousin, Sir Andrew Clarke. He was described in *One Hundred Years of Singapore* (1921) as 'a great man, popular and sympathetic, to whom belongs the fame of being the first founder of the Federated Malay States. His features, as preserved in the splendid bust in the entrance hall of the Singapore Club, are a mirror of courage and determination.'

I wrote to Robert asking him if he knew anything about Sir Andrew's years in Singapore – 1873-5. Robert replied promptly that Singapore had a road and a quay named after him. And, moreover, that Robert and I had even shared a meal at Clarke Quay – though the significance of the name had escaped me at the time. But he was unable to find anything about the Singapore Club or the bust, both apparently lost without trace. It is these little interchanges, these literary connections across oceans, that keep literature and its study humanized, not a matter of abstract theory and citation indexes.

The director of the New South Wales Writers' Centre, Irina Dunn, had established a series of short festivals, and, when I became chair of the centre, readily accepted my suggestion that we should invites those writers I had met with Robert at the conferences Edwin Thumboo and Bruce Bennett had organized. And so those contacts were sustained for another decade with visits to Sydney from Robert, Catherine Lim, Kee Thuan Chye, Krip Yuson, Pira Sudham and many more, providing a welcome change from the predominantly UK and USA product that the global media and publishing empires promote.

And we were delighted to confer upon Robert the first Visiting Fellowship of the Centre, which enabled him to spend some time in Sydney. I am not sure whether it was on this or some other occasion that I suggested to Robert and Esther that they could stay in the house I had bought on retirement up in northern New South Wales. I had never thought of it as in the wilds, but to Robert and Esther the uncurtained windows, the encroaching rain forest and the neighbouring banana farmers offering them toothless smiles and strange greetings proved all too menacing. Esther found things much less threatening up the coast at, of all places, Point Danger.

For a quarter of a century Robert and I have been in touch. Nothing dramatically exciting has happened. There were no catastrophic events that too often erupt in literary friendships. We did not try to follow the tracks of Joseph Conrad and Graham Greene. We were too busy writing and teaching to have time-consuming adventures. And we still carry on writing now. Which is pretty much what being a writer is all about.

Robert Yeo at Eighty: A Celebration, ed. Ismail S. Talib, Epigram Books, Singapore, 2020

Also by Michael Wilding

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Inez Baranay, *Newtown Review of Books.*

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‘Hopkins’s biography of Clarke is well worth reading and this edition places it in the best possible context. As we might expect from this particular team of editors, this is an edition of the highest quality, with a well-edited text, informative introduction, comprehensive and illuminating notes, and (something too often omitted) a detailed index. Though it has taken a long time for Hopkins’s work to become freely available in printed form, it could hardly be better presented than in this excellent edition.’ –
Graham Tulloch, *Transnational Literature*.

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‘To read this collection of magazine and journal essays is in itself an education, encapsulating as it does a lifetime of study, writing and reflection. But there is more, for Professor Wilding is a survivor of that generation that taught in the free universities of Australia, free in more than just the financial sense, and that cared about literature, and cared that you cared about it as well. His pre-lapsarian adhesion to the beneficial purposes of literature in society is an evident inspiration in his career and this book is a wonderful product of the libertarian project that inspired Australian literature for most of our history.’ –
Matthew White, *Quadrant.*

Also by Michael Wilding from Arcadia

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‘If this was as much fun to write as it is to read, Michael Wilding must have enjoyed writing *The Prisoner of Mount Warning.* A take on the secret world, mainstream and underground journalism, Writers’ Centres, the counterculture and much else, the book is a heady ride from Sydney to Byron Bay and the Gold Coast with Plant, resting writer, investigating something that might have happened but perhaps not. Wilding has created a world both funny and creepy for Plant and the reader.’ – Peter Corris.

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‘Plant investigates, not the petty individual crimes like kidnapping, murder or extortion, but the big picture – the intellectual and political follies of the age. True to the genre, Plant’s cases start small and grow but, unlike the books in which the bodies pile up, with Wilding the unstable underpinning of modern industrialized society is laid bare. And made hilariously funny.’ –
Peter Corris.

ASIAN DAWN – ISBN 978192 1875397
‘A compelling narrative with a cast of enigmatic figures. The exotic bar singer, the speech writer for hire, the publisher with guerrilla connections, the sex-addicted expatriate and the

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'*Asian Dawn* is a fast-paced read with lots of seedy sex and compromising secrets, plus a few well aimed jabs at the academic world.' – Cameron Woodhead, *Sydney Morning Herald.*

IN THE VALLEY OF THE WEED – ISBN 978192 5333978
'The Plant novels … are hybrids of satire and crime fiction, too funny to be called bleak, but concealing a complex seriousness of purpose. At the instigation of his old friend Fullalove, Plant in his capacity as private detective goes looking for an academic who has been suspended for thoughtcrime and has subsequently disappeared. The least attractive aspects of neoliberalism and its consequences come in for some savage critique in this intermittently hilarious novel.' – Kerryn Goldsworthy, *The Age.*

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'There is an immense pleasure of various kinds to be had in reading these two novels by Michael Wilding. His wit enlivens the crime fiction genre, and his acquaintance with other forms of literature, especially satire, constantly adds spice to Plant's adventures and misadventures in the mean streets.' – Nicholas Hasluck, *Quadrant*.

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‘Why should the reader be interested in Michael’s protagonists, these “drunken old men of a certain age, forgotten by the world and reciprocating its disregard”? Mostly it’s because they are extremely funny, their verbal witticisms serving to starkly and sometimes surprisingly emphasize their point. Wilding’s satirical edge evokes in the reader not only sly smiles of recognition but outright guffaws of full-blown belly laughter.’ – Irina Dunn, *Quadrant*.